GISH JEN ON THE SUBTLE PRIVILEGES OF RACE

THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 21, 1997 • $2.95

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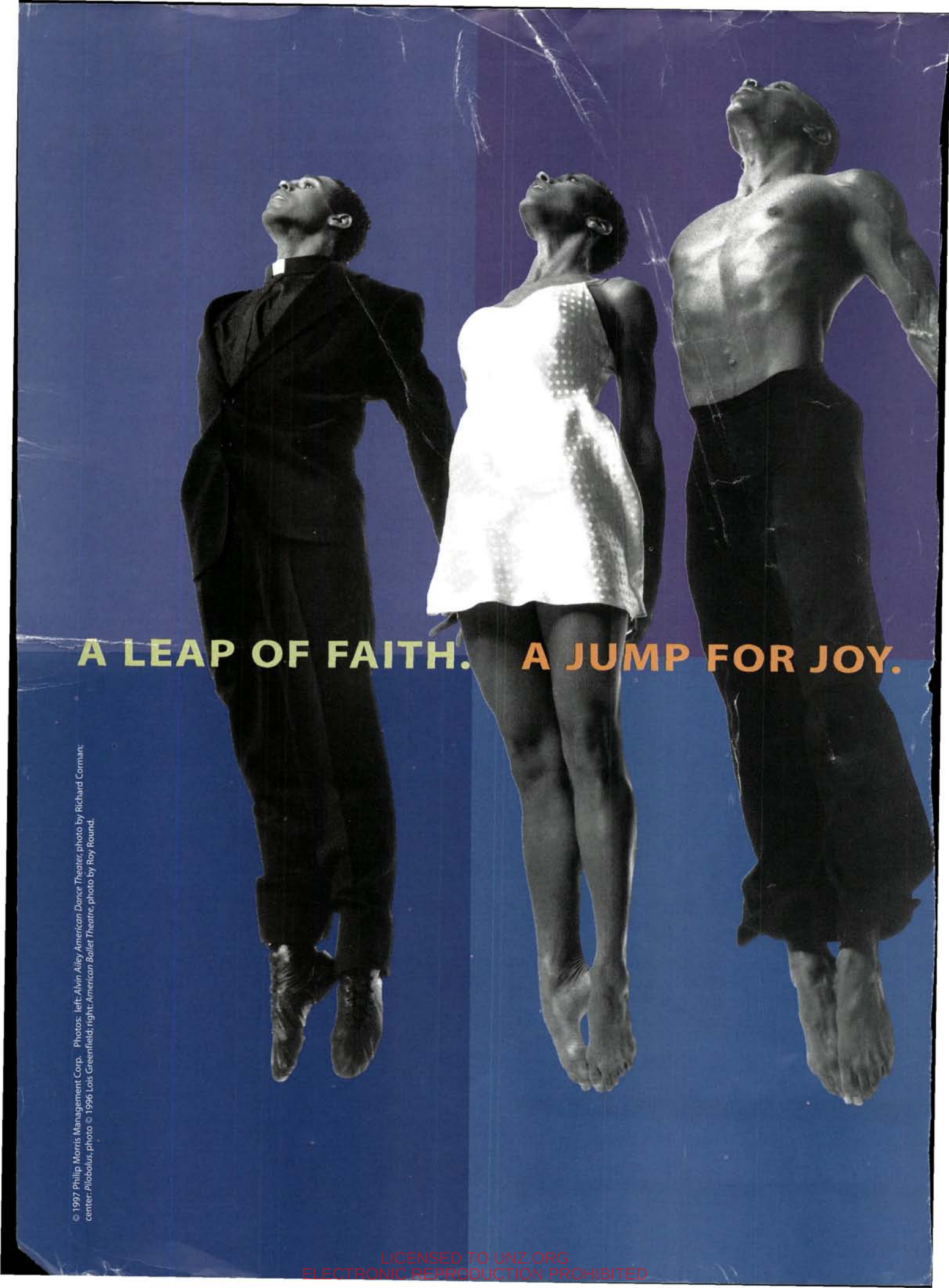

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FROM WASHINGTON

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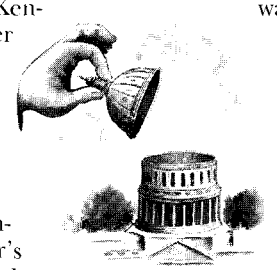
Well, now we know why the president wasn't curious. As faithful readers will recall, President Clinton was asked in a press conference on January 28 about the intriguing fact that the Lippo Group, run by the president's old friend James Riady, had hired the president's old friend Webster Hubbell for $100,000 shortly after Hubbell had, as the questioner put it, "resigned in a scandal from the Justice Department and just a few months before he went to jail for embezzlement."

The question: "Does anything about this arrangement strike you as unusual or suspicious? And, given that there have been public suggestions this money was offered to encourage his silence before the Whitewater investigator, have you taken any steps yourself to assure yourself that this is not the case?" The answer, making a well-deserved second appearance in this column: "First of all, I didn't know about it. To the best of my recollection I didn't know anything about his having that job until I read about it in the press. And I can't imagine who could have ever arranged to do something improper like that and no one around here know about it. It was just not—we did not know anything about it, and I can tell you categorically that that did not happen. I knew nothing about it, none of us did before it happened. And I personally didn't know anything about it, 'til I read about it in the press."

The president's utter disinterest in ascertaining the truth of what was, after all, an allegation of criminality began to become explicable on March 6, when *The New York Times* published a front-page story by Jeff Gerth and Stephen Labaton. They reported that Hubbell—in the months after he was forced to resign from the Justice Department, in the face of charges he had bilked his former law partners of nearly half a million dollars—was paid more than $400,000 from a dozen or so corporations, most of them "businesses controlled by old friends and campaign donors of President Clinton." The largest payments from any one source, totaling about $100,000, came from a Hong Kong company controlled by the Riady family.

Hubbell resigned from the Justice Department in April 1994. At that time, the Riady family was negotiating with China to undertake a $2 billion American-Chinese development project in the Fujian province of China. The Riadys' Hong Kong company put Hubbell on the payroll in June. Two months later, in August, then-Commerce Secretary Ronald H. Brown announced the U.S. government's endorsement of the mammoth Fujian project.

The payments to Hubbell from the Riadys and other FOBs came during a period when Hubbell was under investigation by Whitewater independent counsels Robert Fiske and Kenneth Starr. In a December 1994 plea bargain, Hubbell promised to provide information to Starr and was allowed to plead guilty to two felony counts of mail fraud and tax evasion, for which he ultimately served eighteen months in prison. Starr's prosecutors, in a signal that they did not believe that Hubbell had fulfilled his side of the deal, declined to recommend a reduced sentence for him.



On March 20, Gerth and Labaton offered additional insight into the matter of the president's incuriousness. They reported that Riady had visited Clinton and several top aides at the White House over a period of five days in June 1994. It was only a few days after this personal meeting between Clinton and Riady that Riady's Hong Kong company paid Hubbell the $100,000. Asked if either of the Clintons had known about the Riady payment in 1994—or if, as the president so elaborately claimed in his press conference, they became aware of it only in press reports in 1996—the Clintons' personal attorney, David Kendall, declined to comment.

Now, on April Fools' Day, comes the belated, bedraggled admission by White House special counsel Lanny Davis that, in fact, four of the president's closest advisers and friends—then-chief of staff Thomas "Mack" McLarty, then-head of the Small Business Administration and now-chief of staff Erskine Bowles, then-U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor and perennial intimate Vernon Jordan—had personally taken part in a concerted effort in 1994 to solicit cash from business interests for the disgraced Hubbell. And, it was reported in *The Wall Street Journal*, McLarty had informed Mrs. Clinton at the time he initiated this effort that he was "going to try to help Webb."

Days after Hubbell left the Justice Department, on April 8, 1994, McLarty called Truman Arnold, a Texas oilman and FOB; and Arnold hired Hubbell. McLarty also asked Jordan to help Hubbell out. Bowles took time off from his work at the SBA to personally escort Hubbell to the offices of a Washington investment executive, and also introduced Hubbell to two North Carolina lawyers, but these efforts failed. Kantor helped Hubbell's son find work with the Federal National Mortgage Association.

The White House's latest operative position is: at the time when the president's aides and confidantes were soliciting money for Hubbell, they regarded his alleged embezzlement from his partners as, in the words of Lanny Davis, "an internal billing dispute" that would be amicably settled; and the president had only the fewest, faintest inklings of what was going on.

To believe this, at this point, you have to be Bill Clinton. When Hubbell announced his resignation on March 14, 1994, it was prominently reported that his former partners had already turned down a settlement offer and were seriously considering filing an ethics complaint and a lawsuit against him. On March 16, which is about the time McLarty told Mrs. Clinton that he was going to "help Webb," the *Times* reported that then-Whitewater prosecutor Robert Fiske was considering whether to include Hubbell's billing practices in his criminal probe which "threatens to draw Mr. Hubbell into the financial and legal matters related to Whitewater."

As for the notion that Clinton did not know what his aides were up to, there is this awkward fact: McLarty, Jordan, Kantor and Bowles were four of the president's closest advisers and most trusted friends. Does anyone believe that, without the president's blessing, they would have undertaken a mission that could expose the president to suspicions of potentially impeachable misconduct?

No. The president was incurious about the reporter's question, I strongly suspect, because he knew the answer: his friends and his aides had worked together to pay hush money to Webb Hubbell, and Hubbell had indeed hushed up, and this had been covered up, in the fine tradition of plausible deniability.

Hubbell doesn't say much publicly, but the other day he complained to *The Arkansas Times* about his lousy press. "You piece together this and that, and you make this grand conspiracy. But is it some grand conspiracy or is it Arkansas?" That is what Bill Clinton likes to call "a false choice." And Hubbell knows this. And so does the president.

MICHAEL KELLY

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CORRESPONDENCE

It's a mad mad world

To the editors:

While it's unpleasant to read unflattering things about friends and colleagues ("The Madness of Speaker Newt," March 17), that is not enough to send a person to the keyboard in protest. What is enough is an article filled with errors and misconceptions.

If the point Hanna Rosin wanted to make is that the people in Newt Gingrich's inner circle are there because they can be easily controlled, then she must never have met the pollsters whom she listed. Start with Linda DiVall. No one could ever characterize her as a "go-along get-along type," as someone who could be "controlled." In Linda's first year out of college, she came to work for me when I was director of survey research at the Republican National Committee. I still have the scars on my fingers from trying to rein her in.

When I came to the RNC, I had just completed a seven-year stint with two of the other pollsters from that group, Bob Teeter and Fred Steeper, whom Rosin also considers docile and dormant. While they may have tempered with age, they are not a group of people who lack opinions or keep their ideas to themselves.

It is always fascinating to watch the people who congregate around those in power. It is even more fascinating to watch what these groupies do when their vehicles to fame and fortune stumble—who hangs in and who, fearful that their fifteen minutes of reflected glory might be in jeopardy, talk to their newfound journalist friends and attack their former heroes. What is not fascinating is the ongoing willingness to provide one-sided forums for the disgruntled. Is it possible that the reason Joe Gaylord exercises some caution about the people around Gingrich has less to do with control and more to do with honesty and trustworthiness?

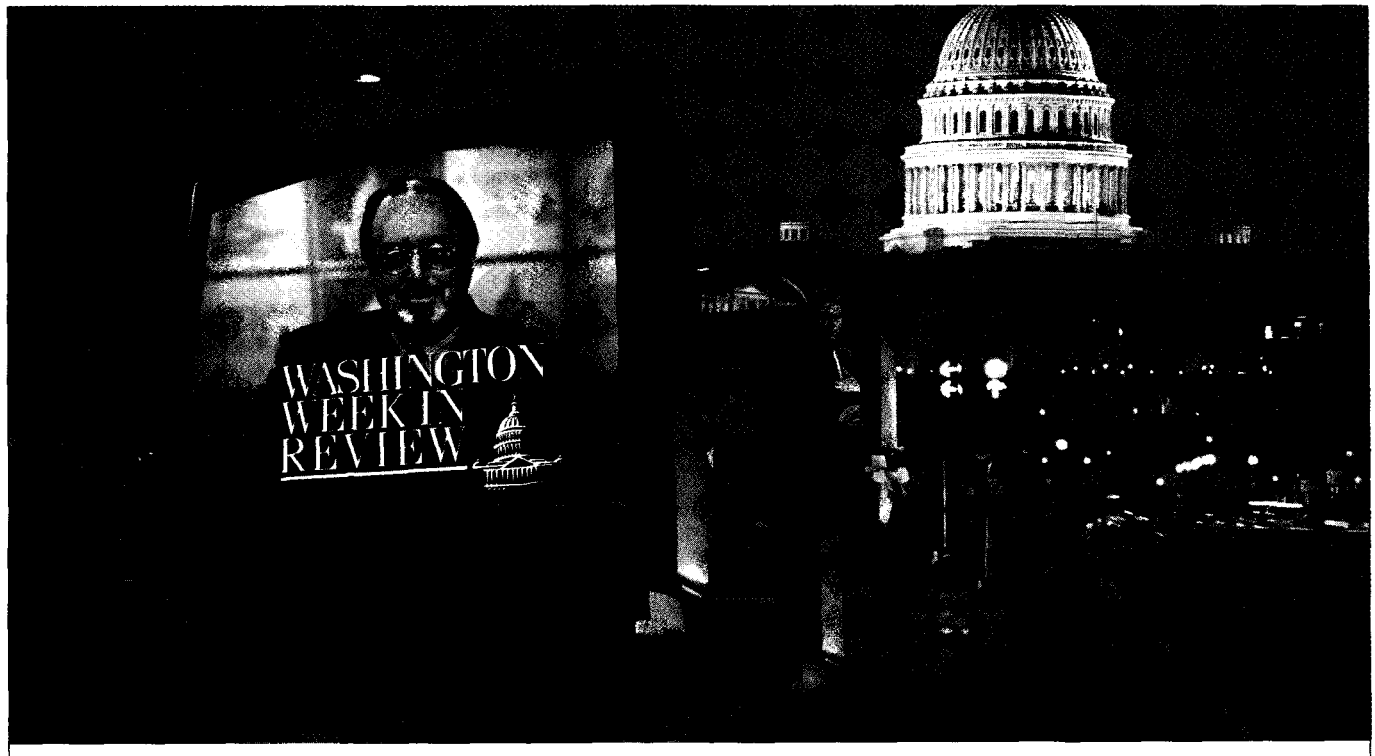
WILMA GOLDSTEIN
Arlington, Virginia

Supply and demand

To the editors:

Susan E. Reed's report on Mexican narco-corruption ("Certifiable," March 17) is long on indignation but short on analysis. Regardless of how corrupt Mexican drug enforcement may be, the real question is whether the world will be better or worse if certification is removed and U.S. foreign aid is (mostly) terminated. On this question, Reed says virtually nothing. She links aid with trade and argues briefly that "increased trade with Mexico cannot in and of itself end the drug traffic." Well, no; probably carpet bombing Colombia would not achieve that goal, either. But if both aid and trade increase the supply of legitimate jobs for ordinary Mexicans, then surely this constitutes both an improvement for Mexico and a positive step toward curtailing its drug trafficking. But there is a further reason why neither aid nor trade will entirely "end the drug traffic." The Mexicans don't print the huge sums of money that are corrupting their system of justice; those sums come from drug purchasers in the United States. Until we can reduce American demand for drugs—through a combination of better access to treatment facilities, improved life opportunities for young people and real punishment for sellers and users—it seems a little hypocritical to condemn other countries for providing the supply.

RUSSELL PITTMAN
Takoma Park, Maryland



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Roll over

To the editors:

The main point of "It's Working" (March 24)—criticizing my recent *Atlantic Monthly* article, "The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done"—is that the welfare rolls are plummeting all over the country, most of all in places like Wisconsin that are the leading edge of the new policies. You conclude that my pessimism is unwarranted. I am glad caseload levels are declining, and I hope they decline further, but your editorial overinterprets the meaning of those changes.

The caseload declines are primarily the result of the relatively low unemployment we are experiencing. No one knows precisely who is leaving the rolls (and who is not coming forward to apply), but I strongly suspect they are mainly short-termers—the struggling people who cycle on and off welfare, and who for now are holding onto their jobs longer when they have them. No state has had time yet to get deeply into implementation of the new federal law with regard to the long-term recipients (the real targets of the so-called reform). To indicate that the new law is working well in their case is simply premature.

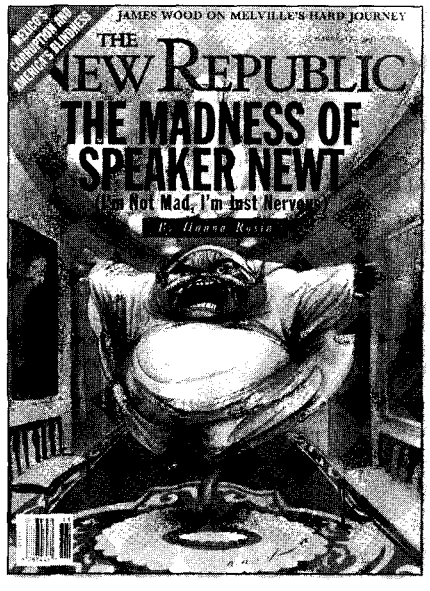
The caseload declines around the country have removed the bulge that produced historically high levels between 1990 and 1993. But there are still close to 4 million adults on welfare, along with about 7 million children. The arbitrary time limits in the new law demand that 80 percent of them be removed within five years. This is a tall order. About half the caseloads are long-term recipients. Many could and should work, but the jury is still out on whether we can produce enough jobs that meet their skill levels and are geographically accessible. The jury is also still out on whether states will make the investments necessary to help people with very low skills and little work experience find jobs. For the sake of their children, if nothing else, I hope we meet the challenge. But I must say too many of the implementation plans we have seen so far cause more concern than comfort.

PETER EDELMAN
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

I was disappointed by your recent editorial on the impact of the new welfare reform law. Last year's exercise in welfare reform was fueled by a political hunger for reducing the country's budget deficit—too often based on the path of least political resistance. I favor balancing the budget—but not on the backs of the nation's most vulnerable people. Ninety-three percent of the budget cuts in the 104th Congress were from assistance for low-income families. Estimates are that welfare reform will save the Treasury $55 billion over six years. Forty-five percent, $23 billion, of that savings is achieved through cuts in benefits to elderly and disabled legal immigrants and their families. Roughly $30 billion in savings comes from cuts in Food Stamps and child nutrition programs, which are vital to the unemployed and low-income working families who are living at or below poverty.

The goal of putting able-bodied people back to work is a good one. The law that Congress passed last year cuts or simply eliminates the most basic of federal assistance to children, working families, the elderly and disabled. The welfare bill did not effectively address issues of economic opportunity for the poor—real jobs at living wages are what the unemployed and working poor of this country need and deserve. Congress walked away from that challenge and so millions of families and their children will suffer. That's anything but real reform.



PAUL WELLSTONE
U.S. Senator
Washington, D.C.

Partially right

To the editors:

Michael Kelly ("Right and Righteous," March 17) dismisses Bill Clinton's rhetoric against partial birth abortion as being not right but merely righteous. We know now, Kelly reasons, that partial birth abortions are not performed primarily to save the lives and protect the health of women since Ron Fitzsimmons has "courageously recanted" these claims on "Nightline." Does Kelly really believe that one man's change of heart is enough to establish the facts concerning these procedures? I'm even more curious about his moral appraisal of TNR's May 13, 1996, editorial, "Better Late Than Never."

Shortly after Clinton vetoed the bill, TNR assured its readers that, though it was politically risky, "Clinton's decision was the right one." Partial birth abortions, the editors explained, "are in many ways the most morally defensible" since "they are almost always a last resort, in cases where catastrophic fetal abnormalities have been discovered late in pregnancy or when continuing the pregnancy would pose a grave threat to the life or health of the mother." Is TNR offering the world yet another courageous recantation? Or is the recent shift in editorial perspective intended to lead us from the righteous to the far right?

TODD BROWN
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

To the editors:

Last spring, President Clinton said, of his partial birth abortion stand, that there are "a few hundred women every year" who need these operations for extreme medical reasons. Michael Kelly now says that this was "another utterance by Bill Clinton that was politically advantageous but entirely untrue."

There's only one problem with Kelly's predictable attack—he offers no evidence to support it. Characteristically, the "evidence" Kelly cites is unrelated to what the president said.

Yes, abortion rights activist Ron Fitzsimmons does now admit that he lied last year about this procedure. He now estimates that several thousand women a year have this procedure for reasons other than extreme medical need.

But that does not refute what the president said—that there is a small number of cases in which the procedure is needed. And, as Kelly would realize if he were not blinded by rage, Clinton's proposal last year would have made "unnecessary" cases illegal.

BOB SOMERBY
Baltimore, Maryland

Michael Kelly replies:

Regarding the May 1996 TNR editorial: William Powers, TNR's media critic, in his treatment of the Fitzsimmons story ("Partial Truths," March 24), noted the editorial as an example of an argument based on disinformation from the abortion-rights side in the debate. As to Mr. Somerby's point: President Clinton's clear position, which he stated forcefully and more than once, was that the procedure was used only in a few hundred cases per year, and almost always to save the life or childbearing capacity of a woman in late pregnancy carrying a seriously deformed fetus who would not long survive birth. This was the abortion-rights line, and it was, as I said, untrue.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 21, 1997

FED ACCOMPLI

Last week the Federal Reserve ended a five-year experiment: How many people can the nation put to work without triggering inflation? The results are fiercely contested, their ramifications enormous. Everybody wants unemployment to be as low as possible, but nobody knows for sure how low that is. Growth optimists believe unemployment can fall much lower than the current 5.3 percent without fueling inflation. Inflation hawks, led by Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan, don't.

But the debate is academic, because monetary policy isn't set by public debates and majority votes, it's set by Alan Greenspan. And Greenspan is sure that the current high levels of economic growth and employment will soon cause a spiral of higher prices. So he raised interest rates last week and appears likely to do so again, effectively ensuring that unemployment will not drop any lower than it is today. Given the data of the last two years, data that, despite endless scrutiny, shows not the slightest hint of creeping inflation, we wish the chairman were a little less certain.

Both Greenspan and his critics agree that prices hinge upon a balance of power between employers and employees. When joblessness drops, the value of labor rises. Employers raise salaries and pass the cost on to consumers. These higher prices cause other workers to demand raises. Such an inflationary spiral can only be stopped if the Federal Reserve slows the economy, making everybody worse off. The big question is how low unemployment can drop before an inflationary spiral begins. Conventional economists have long held that inflation would start to mount if unemployment fell below 6 percent. But the current economic expansion, which began in 1992, has brought unemployment down to 5.3 percent without a trace of rising inflation. For inflation hawks like Greenspan, this state of affairs can't go on.

The growth optimists, with varying levels of plausibility, suggest another story. They believe the economy has entered a new era, capable of sustaining lower unemployment than before. Why have the rules changed? There are several reasons:

Globalization. International competition makes it harder for American companies to raise the cost of their goods, lest foreign firms undercut them. It has also made workers less secure about their future and hence more timid in demanding raises. (Polls of employee confidence support this notion.)

Computers have increased productivity. This is the pivotal point. Productivity ultimately determines wages. If wages are rising just because employees have more leverage, then the boss has to raise prices. But if workers are producing more, then employers can pay for a wage increase out of profits instead of passing the cost on to consumers. The latter scenario seems to be the case. Productivity rose 1.5 percent last year, while real wages rose by just 0.6 percent. The share of the economy going to corporate profits is up a full percentage point from the peak of the last business cycle. This suggests that firms can pay their employees more without hiking prices.

Bad statistics. Most (though not all) economists believe the government has been overestimating inflation for years. That means we have less to worry about than Greenspan thinks. (Greenspan, interestingly, adheres to this theory himself, although he has of yet failed to reconcile it with his inflationary paranoia.)

Hard data to support the new era hypotheses remains sketchy. So far, however, the story checks out. And, even if it's wrong, failure entails nothing more than slightly higher prices and a future interest rate hike. At its current level, inflation appears unlikely to spiral out of control. A little inflation hurts, of course, but it doesn't really start to bite until it hits the mid-to-upper single digits. As MIT economist Paul Krugman wrote recently in *The Economist*, "3 percent inflation does much less than one-third as much harm as 9 percent."

One other recent event has strengthened the case for experimentation: welfare reform. If the government demands that all citizens who can work do work, it cannot simultaneously enforce Greenspan's explicitly anti-employment program. Or, at least, it should not do so without first attempting an alternative. The alternative—an effort to see whether we can successfully push unemployment below 5 percent, and perhaps improve the lives of millions in the American underclass in the process—may prove a pipe dream. But the benefits of success outweigh the costs of failure. And we'll never know unless the Federal Reserve chairman opens himself to the possibility that he is wrong. •

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NOTEBOOK

OMISSION OF DEFEAT: American intelligence apparently believes that Hani Abdel Rahim Sayegh, the Saudi Shiite detained by Canada for his alleged participation in the truck bomb murder of nineteen U.S. servicemen in Dharan last year, was helped in his venture by both Iran and Syria. This was revealed in a March 30 dispatch from *The Boston Globe's* Middle East correspondent, Ethan Bronner. Bronner writes that "if a clear role emerges for Iran or Syria in the bombing of the al-Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, it seems likely that the American policy of containment for Iran will grow." But what about the consequences for American policy toward Syria? As Bronner's omission implies, there would be none. Given America's obsession with satisfying Hafez al-Assad's desire to reoccupy the Golan Heights—an obsession born under Jimmy Carter and inherited first by George Bush and James Baker, and then by Bill Clinton and Warren Christopher—the likelihood is that the Washington peace team would simply avert its eyes, as it has always done when confronted by Syria's enmeshment with the terrorist international. Further evidence, as it emerges, will offer Madeleine Albright the opportunity to alter these craven habits, and we await the showing of the secretary's hand.

FREE SPEECH: Newt Gingrich's long-standing refusal to use the space between his brain and lips for editing has not always been welcomed in Washington. But in Beijing last week, the speaker put his weakness to good use, telling a group at Beijing's Foreign Affairs College that, "America cannot remain silent about the basic lack of freedom—speech, religion, assembly, the press—in China. Were we to do so, we would not only betray our own tradition, we would also fail to fulfill our obligations as a friend of both China and Hong Kong." After years in which America conveyed its moral concerns to Beijing through such tough talkers as Warren Christopher and Brent Scowcroft, American diplomacy was well served by Gingrich's lack of it. And it was also well served by Al Gore, who levied some stern public warnings on human rights as well. At Qinghua University, in a speech reported in only a few American newspapers, Gore spoke directly and provocatively to the assembled students, asserting that "Americans, in our deepest souls, where the most precious things are kept, believe that the freedom to inquire and debate and, when necessary, to challenge existing institutions and habits of thought, is the key to creating the world ... in which nations conduct their affairs, both outside their borders and within, according to the rule of law tempered by a love of justice." That the vice president uttered these words on Chinese soil was important—because they are true, and because their truth ensures that America's current policy of appeasement cannot endure indefinitely. But, even more critically, the sentiments that Gore described are not uniquely American; they reside in Chinese hearts as well. And, for that reason, the regime in Beijing cannot endure indefinitely either.

CLARK'S EXPEDITION: Bill Clinton last week nominated General Wesley Clark to lead NATO and America's forces in Europe. If the president was trying to remind the public about the lack of seriousness with which his administration has taken war crimes in Bosnia, this is a fine choice. On August 27, 1994, Clark, then director of strategy, plans and policy for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, went to Banja Luka—and met with Ratko Mladic, the bloodstained military leader of the Bosnian Serbs. The State Department had advised against the meeting, on account of Mladic's well-documented war crimes in Gorazde, Srebrenica and Sarajevo. Still, Clark and Mladic had a jolly time. Mladic gave Clark some plum brandy and a pistol with a Cyrillic inscription, and the two merrily swapped military hats. What do you do with a man with that kind of moral cluelessness? Promote him.

THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG: After the grisly execution of Pedro Medina last week—orange and blue flames leaping from the convicted murderer's leather mask shortly after "Old Sparky" was switched on—it seemed that Florida legislators might consider a more placid form of doing away with death row inmates. Instead, Florida Attorney General Bob Butterworth warned murderers they "better not do it in the state of Florida because we may have a problem with our electric chair." Al Gutman, chairman of the state senate's criminal justice committee, noted that "the death penalty is ... supposed to work as a deterrent." Then there was Victor Crist, the chairman of the Florida House Justice Council, who waxed nostalgic for a more humane era. "If you really want the least painful, most accurate method," he said, "it would be the guillotine." The Enlightenment lives.

FUND-RAISING PIETY WATCH: Indiana Representative David McIntosh has always been a darling of corporate America. As executive director of Dan Quayle's Competitiveness Council, McIntosh railed against long-cherished government regulations. In Congress, he has lately turned his attentions to the DNC's fund-raising morass, declaring that "every American has a right to know if Clinton used the White House for the people's business or a Motel 1600 for fat cats." It also appears that every American has a right to know the same about McIntosh. As *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Nation* have recently reported, the Regulatory Affairs Subcommittee chairman and his staff met with close to 200 business lobbyists from March 1995 through October 1996, a list that includes such heavyweights as Dow Chemical, General Motors and Philip Morris. On fifty-four occasions, within a month of their soirées, the same business interests deposited a check in the congressman's re-election fund. Call it coincidence.•

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Challenge.

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by David Quammen
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$16.00

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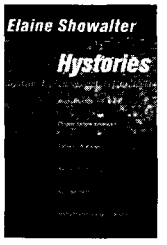
by Saul Friedländer
This first of a definitive two-volume work on Hitler's Final Solution offers a horrific and revealing picture of the years leading up to the Holocaust.
(HarperCollins)
$30.00

The Coming Conflict with China
by Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro
The authors analyze the ideological and economic problems that currently plague Sino-American relations, and offer dire predictions.
(Alfred A. Knopf)
$23.00



Hystories
by Elaine Showalter
An intriguing survey of the hysterical condition—its causes, cures, famous patients and doctors—and its significance in contemporary culture.
(Columbia University Press)
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Little X
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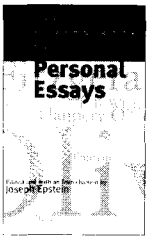
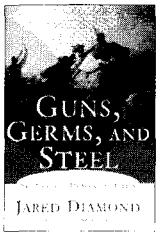


The Norton Book of Personal Essays
edited by Joseph Epstein
Some 50 essays by notable 20th-century practitioners of the essay art form are collected here by writer Joseph Epstein.
(Norton)
$30.00



Guns, Germs, and Steel
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"...a whirlwind tour through 13,000 years of history on all the continents.... Its account of how the modern world was formed is full of lessons for our own future."—*Paul R. Ehrlich,* Stanford University
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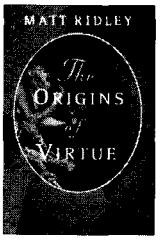

The Origins of Virtue
by Matt Ridley
The former *Economist* editor examines new scientific research in evolutionary psychology and its radical implications for moral behavior.
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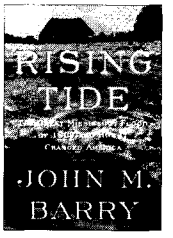

Rising Tide
by John M. Barry
A revealing look at the 1927 Mississippi River flood and its impact on demography, politics, race relations and American society.
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An education reform goes awry.

CLASS CONFLICT

By Robyn Gearey

I hadn't been in California twenty-four hours when I began to realize that the schools were experiencing a few technical difficulties implementing Governor Pete Wilson's much hyped class-size reduction initiative. "Do you wanna teach second grade?" called a voice from the teachers' lounge. "I'll pay you fifty bucks myself." Startled, I looked around, then noticed a group of teachers sitting at a long table by the door. One of them was waving, trying to catch my eye. Thinking the offer a joke, I laughed. "I'm a journalist, not a teacher," I protested. "Babysitting is the closest thing I have to teaching experience." The teacher wasn't fazed. "Do you have a college degree?" she asked. "Yes," I replied. "Well, then," she said, satisfied, "you're perfectly qualified. When can you start?"

That was the first clue. The second came a few days later when I read a *Los Angeles Times* letter to the editor written by Lori Borcover, whose daughter's school was so tight on space that it closed the library in order to use it as a classroom. Soon after, the *Times* reported that an elementary school in Costa Mesa had turned its auditorium into classrooms—eliminating school plays and other activities. The school's principal told the *Times*, "This takes away a major part of our educational programs."

Like the teacher-hiring frenzy, the classroom-space crunch was part of a manic attempt by California schools to cash in on the governor's plan, unveiled last July, which promised a $650 per child subsidy for every classroom in the first and second grades that met the twenty-students-per-teacher standard by February 16. (The program also applied to some kindergarten and third-grade classes.) Most did, in part by holding classes in gyms and teachers' lounges, and hiring unqualified teachers. And how has Wilson responded to this chaos? This year he has decided to expand the program, throwing the schools into another round of turmoil.

Class-size reduction is, at least in theory, a great idea. Dozens of studies have shown it to be one of the most effective ways to raise classroom achievement. Prior to Wilson's initiative, California's classrooms were the most crowded in the nation, averaging about thirty kids. And so when Wilson discovered that, in 1994, 56 percent of the state's fourth-graders were rated "below-basic" on a nationwide reading exam, he made class-size reduction a crusade. The response was overwhelming. "This is the most exciting time in twenty or thirty years," gushed Delaine Eastin, superintendent of public instruction in California. "I think this is the start of a renaissance," effused Clovis Unified School District Superintendent Walt Buster. A headline in the *Los Angeles Times* declared: "SMALLER CLASSES, BIG IMPROVEMENT."

But, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details. To get results quickly, Wilson set a deadline and offered a financial incentive. The schools began struggling to find space. Many were already overcrowded, with one in seven relying on a year-round academic schedule to accommodate the overflow. And that was before the governor's plan created a need for 20,000 new classrooms.

Wilson's initiative set aside $200 million for new classroom space, but that space is not easy to come by. Portable classrooms, if the school has the land, are one option, but they are expensive (they cost up to $54,000; the state is only allotting $25,000 per new classroom) and rare. California manufactures only 2,500 portable classrooms a year; the 20-1 initiative has generated orders for some 15,000. The state's department of education estimates that the backlog now runs two to three years.

Construction is another option, but it also requires more land, money and time than most schools can spare. So, in the meantime, makeshift classrooms—libraries, cafeterias and music rooms—will have to suffice. Many schools have opted to squeeze two teachers (and forty kids) in one regular-size room, a decision that even the department of education, the initiative's most enthusiastic proponent, calls "inadvisable."

And if school administrators are desperate for space, they're even more desperate for teachers. California accredits fewer than 5,000 new teachers each year; to meet the 20-1 standard, the state needs 20,000. Even before Wilson announced his initiative, California had trouble attracting enough qualified teachers—in 1994, 11 percent of its teachers were working with either a temporary or an emergency license, or no license at all, already the highest percentage of non-credentialed teachers in the country. Since the initiative passed, one-third of the teachers hired to fulfill it have lacked traditional credentials. In California today, anyone with a bachelor's degree and a passing score on a basic skills test (which many educators say is on a fifth-grade level) can teach. "We've reached so deep into the pool, we're now taking people we wouldn't have hired a year ago," said Douglas Mitchell, a professor at the University of California-Riverside.

The influx of unqualified teachers makes many people nervous. "I feel better having thirty-two students with an experienced teacher than I do with twenty and a totally inexperienced teacher," says Rebecca Ryan, president of the Pomona district governing board. In a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed, Dennis L. Evans, a professor at UC-Irvine, said, "An elementary class of 20 taught by an ill-prepared 'instant' teacher will prove far worse for the students involved than if they were in a class of 40 taught by a highly qualified and dedicated teacher." Some fear that the teacher shortage is exacerbating the inequalities between urban and suburban schools. Wealthy suburban districts can afford to lure experienced teachers from

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Chairman Arafat:

On March 11, you released from prison Ibrahim Makadama, chief of the secret military wing of the Hamas terrorist organization.

On March 21, a Hamas suicide bomber murdered three Israeli women and wounded more than forty people in a Tel Aviv café. That very day, Makadama addressed thousands of cheering people at a rally in Gaza.

Here's a translation of what he said:

> **"Nothing can stop Israel except holy warriors carrying explosives on their bodies to destroy the enemies of God. We will not liberate Jerusalem through negotiations; we will not liberate Jerusalem through demonstrations and rallies. We will liberate Jerusalem through continuous *jihad* [holy war], and with the help of Allah, blessed be his name, we will continue on the path of *jihad*.**
>
> **"Our people must chase them, whether they live in Tel Aviv or in Latin America. The new *intifada* [uprising] is a different kind of *intifada,* and just as Rabin, in the past, wanted Gaza to drown in the sea, we must make Netanyahu curse the day his mother gave birth to him, and we must make Netanyahu hope that Jerusalem will drown in the sea.**
>
> **"Do not fear the strength of your enemy. Do not fear his planes or his atom bombs. Do not fear America or the other heretical nations that support it.**
>
> **"Allah is with us, Allah is the greatest, Allah is with us, Allah is the greatest."**

Chairman Arafat,which will it be? Peace or *Jihad*?

For everyone's sake, we pray it's peace.

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other parts of the country, even Canada, to fill their classrooms. It is the poorer, urban schools that are forced to rely on inexperienced teachers.

And since Wilson's class-size initiative only applies to younger grades, many school officials admit they have had to shortchange older students to reduce class sizes in the lower grades. James A. Fleming, superintendent of the Capistrano Unified School District, said that his district had to take funds away from a middle-school English program to help pay for the initiative. There are long-range financial concerns as well. The state only provides a fraction of the funds for the new classes and teachers, and, while most communities successfully scrambled to meet this year's deadline, it's likely that they will begin to default in ever increasing numbers. Mike Fine, the chief financial officer of the Newport-Mesa Unified School District, told *The Los Angeles Times*, "I think at least one-third of the districts who instituted the class-size reduction won't be able to sustain it for more than three years."

So it was quite a surprise last January when Pete Wilson announced that his 1997-98 budget proposal allocated an additional $304 million to *expand* the initiative to fully include both kindergarten and the third grade. Administrators who have spent the past six months struggling to cut first- and second-grade classes were hoping the new budget might provide additional money to help them cope with the financial strain incurred in meeting this year's deadline. But instead, they face the Sisyphean prospect of acquiring another 5,000 teachers and classrooms. No wonder many educators found it hard to share Wilson's enthusiasm. As one L.A. school official put it: "We are too busy trying to recover from the governor's last great idea." •

PIGTOWN DISPATCH

BUSINESS AS USUAL

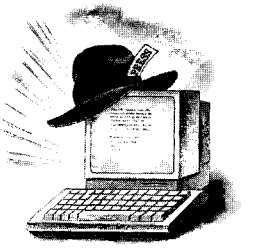
By Joe Mathews

Three years ago, the police officers who conduct prostitution sweeps in this southwest Baltimore neighborhood noticed a trend. The women they had been arresting for years along Washington Boulevard—Pigtown's main street of Formstone rowhouses and half-empty storefronts—no longer gave Pigtown addresses. "A lot of the women had moved to the suburbs," says Officer Van Watson. "They still came into the city to turn tricks, but other than that, they didn't see any hope or opportunity there. There was nothing."

Pigtown's demimondes aren't the only ones disillusioned by life in this integrated slum. Once a flourishing residential and industrial neighborhood anchored by the B&O Railroad, Pigtown has been sliding downhill for years. The majority of the 6,500 people who live here are high-school dropouts, and nearly one in six adults is unemployed. Although violent crime is low and Pigtown has a small group of new middle-class home buyers, the community consists largely of small-time criminals tethered to the drug trade and older working-class people trapped in their homes by it.

But the spring of 1995 brought the promise of change. Two new residents arrived in Pigtown. PTP Industries, Inc., a battery and computer disk packaging firm, moved into a building on Washington Boulevard. And something called the federal empowerment zone arrived from the nation's capital—part of a massive government effort to bring businesses back to inner cities.

The feds had chosen Baltimore as one of six federal urban revitalization areas. The city's share of the $3.5 billion empowerment pie (it rivals the War on Poverty in size) was $100 million in grants, concentrated in six neighborhoods or "villages," of which Pigtown was one. The zone was classic corporate welfare: it offered a $3,000 rebate on a company's (in this case PTP's) payroll tax for each zone resident hired. And, by targeting the benefits to specific areas, federal officials hoped to create controlled laboratories for economic development. To help with Pigtown's resurrection, Maryland gave PTP a sweetheart lease on 330,000 square feet in one of Pigtown's largest buildings, an old Montgomery Ward warehouse.



In Pigtown, the notion of an empowerment zone, and a company willing to take advantage of it, tapped a powerful nostalgia for the long-ago days of plentiful industrial jobs. Even Pigtown's name suggests a better era, a century ago, when hogs were driven through its streets on their way to the slaughterhouses. "A lot of us spent time talking with the PTP people about poverty and jobs," says Arnold Sherman, a former member of the neighborhood's empowerment board. "I believed PTP was going to be an answer to the unemployed, to some of the prostitution, to many problems." PTP needed to double its workforce, from 250 to 500. The new hires would be for the kind of low-skill, entry-level jobs that Pigtown's poorest residents could do.

Pigtown had the makings of an empowerment zone success story, a model for those who believe government can employ business to fight poverty. Except that it hasn't turned out that way. The fact that both sides in Pigtown—community and company—consider the experience a failure stands as a reminder of an unpleasant truth: too many inner-city residents are unable to adequately perform even the simple assembly-line work that PTP offers.

Certainly, Pigtown residents were eager for work. As the April 1995 opening of the PTP plant approached, neighborhood leaders fanned out, distributing flyers with information about the new jobs. More than 160 people attended a job fair; PTP hired 103. They found about another three dozen workers through a city job-training

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program and the rest of their hires by word of mouth.

But the employees ran into trouble almost immediately. The jobs PTP offered were the most basic. Thermoforming machines mold plastic film into packaging materials. Workers on an assembly line across from the machines fit flashlights and disks into the packages. The job is unvarying and endless. Workers are not allowed to alternate tasks and must stand on their feet for seven and a half hours a day with only one break, for lunch. New workers had been told these jobs were boring, almost mindless. But, as one employee, Jackie Littlejohn, said, "We were not prepared for what this work was like."

About twenty of the new workers disappeared after receiving their first paychecks. Others began showing up for work only sporadically. Marilyn Edwards, who had been collecting unemployment when she was hired by PTP, says, "The biggest problem you saw was people who lied all the time. They didn't come to work or were missing work." Employees recall standing on the line next to co-workers who reeked of alcohol or appeared to be under the influence of drugs. Many workers couldn't seem to concentrate. Says H. Eugene Funk, an attorney for the company, "Many of the people from the community and job-training program ... could not pass a drug test."

PTP had expected turnover, but not like this. Within three months, more than half the new employees had quit or had been fired. Faced with massive discipline and performance problems, many supervisors overreacted. Some supposedly insulted employees. Others, workers claim, denied them bathroom breaks. Andre Walters, who worked on a battery line, claims a supervisor denied him protective goggles for days. "We were treated like children," says Littlejohn. Vice President Jeff Hays counters: "We had to be strict. We had problems, and employees have to produce."

PTP's approach backfired when a handful of workers approached organizers for the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE). A clash ensued during which both the company and union heavily pressured workers; several quit. The union actually used PTP's efforts to hire from Pigtown against the company. It argued that, because PTP was in the empowerment zone and employed zone residents, the company had a "special responsibility to create a climate of rehabilitation," as one organizer said.

By this time, PTP had lost two major customers because of the heavy personnel turnover, and President William Hartley found the union's argument too much to take. He fired off a private letter to the mayor: "Imagine, if you can, the reaction of a business owner contemplating a move into the city's empowerment zone. PTP is an employer who invested millions of dollars in the empowerment zone, only to find itself subject to a slanderous campaign by a renegade union aided by public officials."

Employees ultimately voted against joining the union (although the National Labor Relations Board issued a complaint against the company for violations of labor law). After the vote, PTP launched an employee newsletter and offered worker-friendly extras like a volleyball court. But, rightly concerned about employee performance, it also began a drug-testing program. About a dozen workers quit before being tested, and nearly forty more were fired for testing positive. A year after the plant's opening, less than one-quarter of the new employees remained on the job.

Desperate to fill spots on the lines, PTP turned to the Catholic Charities office in one of Washington's Maryland suburbs. Its supervisor for refugee placement at the time, Phu Le, placed more than 300 refugees a year in jobs and, as president of the Maryland Vietnamese Mutual Association, had access to an applicant pool of thousands more. Ironically, his work was also partly subsidized by matching grants from the federal government—grants that, he says, came to about $1,400 for every worker Catholic Charities places. To Le, PTP was a bonanza. The company hired older, hard-to-place refugees with few English skills. And the refugees were so appreciative of the company's willingness to hire whole families and offer plenty of overtime that many turned down better-paying posts to work for PTP. Le sent the company more than 200 workers. "PTP has been a constant customer," he says. "They like having a lot of refugees, especially Asians."

Locals like Edwards had complained about PTP's $200-a-week salary. But the refugees considered themselves lucky. Thi Nguyen, for instance, worked at the plant along with his wife and their four children. With six salaries, Nguyen, a former South Vietnamese naval officer who spent seven years in a communist jail, was able to rent a three-bedroom house in a safe neighborhood outside the empowerment zone. The Nguyens' two new Hondas are parked out front. "We feel blissful because this company and this country have treated us so well," says Nguyen.

PTP still hires some zone residents, but most of its new employees live in the suburbs. Executives were given computer software that can check whether a prospective employee lives in the zone, but they don't use it. "No employer is going to hire people who aren't performing well, aren't coming to work on time, or are abusing drugs—just to get a tax credit," says PTP's Hays.

For now, PTP executives have bigger worries; they announced recently that the firm would close, at least temporarily. The reason has nothing to do with the empowerment zone. America Online, PTP's chief customer, is refusing to honor its contracts and owes the firm more than $2 million. AOL disputes that. The matter is in litigation.

Will the company survive? Few people in Pigtown seem to care. The local residents' "village center" board, which is charged with deciding how to spend the neighborhood's empowerment money, recently came out with a new land-use plan. It is full of ideas for creating businesses, housing, even an ice skating rink. How does the plan recommend Pigtown make room for new houses? Bulldoze PTP.

JOE MATHEWS writes from Baltimore and Brooklyn.

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A FINE MESS

By Stephen Glass

Six longtime Democratic staffers file into a Capitol Hill home at 11 p.m. on a Monday night. Each makes his way to the back of the house, down a creaky wood stairway and into a damp basement. It is—oddly, given the location—a fancy occasion: they are all wearing dark suits, sipping champagne and eating gourmet cheeses on little crackers. They are laughing in that stiff way that men laugh when they are dressed up and trying to look important. Taking up most of one side of the basement is a ten-foot long, five-foot high object shrouded with a white sheet.

One by one the guests step in front of the shrouded object, and each delivers a two-minute speech. The first mocks the "phoneyness" of Capitol Hill's recent bipartisanship. Another proclaims "the need to wrestle America from the Republicans." The fifth man recites:

> "The only thing worse
> than me saying this verse
> is Gingrich the Newt,
> who will soon get the boot.
> So start the clock ticking.
> We want Gingrich to get a real licking."

The others applaud. After another speech, the home's owner smashes a bottle of champagne on the object, saying: "We christen thee: The Newt-O-Meter"—and, with a dramatic flourish, he removes the shroud.

What he unveils is a large black-and-white digital clock built from plywood and electrical parts bought at a local Radio Shack. When you push a red button, the Newt-O-Meter counts upward from $300,000, the amount of the House speaker's still-unpaid fine for ethical violations. "It adds 6.8 cents a minute," explains one of the clock's builders. "That's what we figure he would be paying in interest." The men count down before turning on the machine. And, when they hit zero and the clock clicks on and the counter begins whirring, they begin cheering and dancing around the room. At one point, they even form a conga line. It's a grand time to be a Newt-hater.

In January, when Gingrich agreed to pay a $300,000 fine for misleading the Ethics Committee, he said he hoped the settlement would finally put the investigation behind him. Now, two months later, the unpaid fine has become as big a problem as the investigation, to the point where, again, Gingrich's very speakership is threatened.

On the one hand, Gingrich complains he can't afford to pay the money from his own bank account. On the other hand, Democrats and many Republicans say they won't stand for him paying it with campaign funds. But the fine isn't merely forcing Gingrich to choose between his pocketbook and his speakership. It is threatening to make him choose between his wife and his speakership. Friends say that Marianne Gingrich, who handles the family's finances, has made it clear she won't allow any part of their savings to go to the U.S. Treasury.

Marianne Gingrich's position is rooted in reality. Her husband, unlike many lawmakers, is not rich. As speaker, he earns $171,500 a year. His assets are worth less than $262,000, according to his most recent financial disclosure forms. And the much criticized book contract with Rupert Murdoch's publishing company for *To Renew America* generated only $470,000 in royalties—far less than expected. In other words, the ethics fine equals at least one-third and probably much more of Gingrich's net worth.

According to a friend of the speaker's wife, Marianne told Gingrich that she'll "walk" if he pays the fine out of personal funds. "I suspect that's an exaggeration," the friend said. "But not much of one. She wants to make herself clear on this point. Ever since he's become speaker she's put up with a lot. She's not going to put up with being put in the poorhouse."

"For all everyone's impressions about Gingrich being cold to women he's married to, he respects Marianne," the friend added. "Even if he didn't, the last thing he needs now is an angry wife talking to the press. He knows that and she knows that. Everyone knows that."

Another of Marianne's friends said Newt's wife felt like she lost her chance at financial security when Gingrich returned a $4.5 million book advance amid questions of impropriety. "This time," the friend said, "Marianne is not going to lose. You'll see."

While Gingrich's office won't comment on Marianne's views, his spokeswoman Christina Martin said Marianne's opinions will have sway over any decision he makes. The problem is that they are not swaying fellow Republicans. "We're being told [Marianne] has a

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difficult time accepting that her husband has to pay when she thinks he's done nothing wrong," Connecticut Republican Christopher Shays told reporters. "He's got to come to grips quickly with the fact he needs to pay the fine."

Coming to grips is made all the more difficult by Gingrich's conviction that paying the fine would not necessarily save him his job as speaker. In interviews, two Republican congressmen and eight senior Republican staffers said Gingrich is caught in a vise of indecision because he fears that he has lost so much support among the Republican majority that he faces a party coup no matter what he does about the fine. If this is true, paying the fine now, in hopes of keeping the speakership, would amount to Gingrich walloping himself with what the Republicans call the "double whammy."

"If Gingrich is going to lose the speakership anyway, he doesn't want to end up paying the fine out of his pocket," explained a senior staffer of a congressman who has hinted he would like to supplant Gingrich. Unlike his colleagues, Gingrich's constituents don't care how he pays the fine; a recent poll shows a majority of his district doesn't even think he did anything wrong. This gives him the leeway, if he loses the speakership, to dip into his campaign funds. The only way to avoid a double whammy is therefore to delay. And that is exactly what he is doing. Martin said Gingrich may not decide how to pay the fine until late summer.

There is more than his political capital at stake. While he delays, he can earn interest on his savings and allow inflation to nibble away at the penalty. The longer he waits, the lower the fine.

Meanwhile, the question of who will pay the fine is limiting Gingrich's ability to communicate with a congressional press corps that never liked him in the first place. It's not that the speaker doesn't want to talk to the press, it's that he doesn't want to talk about the fine. And the less he wants to talk about it, the more the media do.

So the man who once cornered reporters to harangue them about laptops for the poor and rocketing the handicapped into space is now hiding from the press. Sometimes he even uses his Capitol Police security detail to keep the media away. "It's more frustrating than watching Reagan say he can't hear you because of the noisy helicopter," said one longtime Washington journalist. In early March, after a press conference to discuss the direction of the 105th Congress, Gingrich snuck out the side door before anyone could ask him about the penalty. Reporters who tried to follow him into the hall were blocked by a band of GOP congressmen. One week later, Gingrich's aides told reporters that there would be "ground rules" forbidding them to ask about the fine if they wanted to attend a photo-op. After reporters complained, the rules were dropped, but when a reporter asked about the penalty, Gingrich responded with a simple "Thank you for coming."

Gingrich's coyness annoys some of his fellow Republicans nearly as much as it does reporters. "His refusal to talk about the fine is troubling," said one GOP congressman. "We have to know if and how he's planning to make good. I think his refusal to speak speaks a lot about his problems of keeping the top job."

Hoping to placate his wife, his colleagues and his press corps, Gingrich recently instructed his staff to develop other ways to pay the $300,000. They came up with three alternatives: a legal defense fund, asking other members to foot the bill, or using personal funds on an installment plan.

At first, the legal defense fund seemed the most promising. Democrats wouldn't be able to criticize the idea since President Clinton has his own fund to pay for mounting legal expenses from Whitewater and the Paula Jones sexual harassment case. But, unlike the president's supporters, GOP, donors have responded coolly to the idea. A New York investment banker who gave more than $20,000 to Republicans during the last election cycle said he would "never, ever" give money to a Gingrich legal fund. "I can give the same amount to the RNC, and someone will remember," the investment banker said. "But if Gingrich loses the speakership, then the money I gave won't work for my beliefs as well." And Gingrich can hardly afford to resort to the kind of aggressive fund-raising techniques that got him into trouble in the first place; the speaker's woes from the $300,000 fine make it impossible for him to raise enough money to get out of the bind.

Asking other lawmakers to foot the $300,000 has turned out to be even less promising. Republican House members have shown a deep, abiding reluctance to dig into their own pockets to bail out their leader. "You've got to be kidding," a longtime Appropriations Committee staffer said. "Members laughed when they heard that hair-brained idea. Who's going to give him money for his problem? They've all got their own to worry about."

That leaves the third option: paying the penalty out of his pocket in installments. While Republicans probably won't balk at the plan, it does nothing to resolve his wife's opposition to using personal funds. Hence, the current course of action: stall.

In the meantime, the Newt-O-Meter is stored under the basement staircase. The staffers, who spent two weekends building it, say their bosses, six House and Senate lawmakers, don't want them to use it just yet. "It's a big and messy weapon," the principal clockmaker said. "If we prop it up on the Hill, it'll tarnish Newt, but why should we do the dirty work if the Republicans are doing it already?"

And what if he pays up his fine?

"Then we'll just recalibrate the timer for a different Newt crisis," he said, smirking. "There seem to be new ones every day." •

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Identity politics v. inner lives.

WHO'S TO JUDGE?

By Gish Jen

Last summer, Simon Schama invited me to be a judge of the PEN/Hemingway award; I accepted. All through the fall, I diligently plowed through the piles of novels that were sent me, looking for originality, passion and poise; for vision, economy, coherence, resonance. I tried to give myself over to the books, to accept their many different ambitions, rather than relying on personal preferences for, say, complexity of tone or that lovely quality that Italo Calvino calls lightness. I tried, in short, to judge as impartially as I was able—as, I believe, did my two fellow judges, of whose dedication I cannot say enough.

I noticed that in the screening process I was sent a disproportionate number of novels written by Asian Americans, but did not resent it. I assumed that the PEN coordinator, a caring and organized man, saw me as a person with an unusual familiarity with Asian American literature, which I am, and that he saw my familiarity as a fair expertise to draw on, which it is. For in fact, as an Asian American writer, I do have an increased sensitivity not only to the life experience out of which many of these novels are made, but also to their present social and literary context. If nothing else, I alone among the judges was aware that Chang-rae Lee, an Asian American writer, had won the PEN/Hemingway award last year.

This fact became relevant when it began to seem not only that the Chinese author Ha Jin would win this year, but that, including him, two of the three finalists would be of Asian descent. I tried to point out to my fellow judges a couple of things: first, as an Asian American, I was sure to come under at least private scrutiny for bias if these were the results. I was hardly dying to judge another contest, but would certainly not want to emerge from this one with a reputation for chauvinism. Second, I tried to note that, as a result of the larger context, including the fact of an Asian American judge, the Asian American writers involved might not experience their honor as untainted approbation. Indeed, at some level, the one white male finalist might well be seen, in tacit contrast, as the only person honored solely on the basis of his writing.

In bringing up these things, I was not agitating to change the results. I was simply drawing attention to what seemed to me unfortunate facts of life. My fellow judges, though, reacted with bemusement: Do you really think so? Later, the PEN coordinator asked the same question: Do you really think so?

I wished I did not think so. I wished that I could do my share of writerly community service without its turning complicated: I wished that, like my colleagues, I could leave this tour of duty as I had come in—as a writer, rather than as an Asian American. And I longed, suddenly, for the companionship of a fellow minority member. I knew that any minority writer would have instantly acknowledged the situation to be awkward and loaded. Many majority writers would have also; but how nice it would have been to have a minority writer, of whom I could be sure.

These are not sentiments I am proud to recall. My colleagues, I think, were equally uncomfortable. They denied the complications of being a minority writer, partly to reassure me and partly, perhaps, to distance themselves from those who generate complication. I was not reassured, though, to hear suggestions that the social context around minority writers is not charged. It is. To deny that reality is to avail oneself of a privilege not shared by people like me.

The social context around minorities has, thankfully, changed with time. Before multiculturalism, the problem for Asian Americans was that we were quite profoundly nobody, in a way that current scholarship is making more and more appallingly clear. Neither seers nor seen, we mostly served as projection screens for the population at large. Silent screens, I might add; only fifteen years ago, when I was a grad student at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, it was a given that Asian American writers would never be published by a general interest magazine. I received letters from places like *The Paris Review* asking bluntly for more exotic work; and stories that, for all their faults, now appear in dozens of textbooks, were regarded as enigmas. "Brilliant writing," wrote one editor, "but what's it about?"

It is thanks to multiculturalism that the laundry list of topics a story could be about—man versus nature,

GISH JEN is the author most recently of *Mona in the Promised Land* (Knopf).

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coming of age, et cetera—has been expanded to include "being between worlds." With this expansion, my stories became models of clarity; just as we Asian Americans abruptly became Somebody. Suddenly we were able to speak for ourselves, to see as well as make ourselves seen. Multiculturalism made a great many people understand the relationship between power and perception, and that is a good thing.

Unfortunately, though, multiculturalism has attracted adherents who, far from using its gains to further free the self, have simply substituted new strictures for old. In identity politics, to define oneself from without is to acknowledge the "truth"; to define oneself otherwise is to deny the "truth." This sort of thinking represents a failure of self-knowledge. To say you are an Asian American woman certainly does say something about your cultural inheritance and the kinds of limits you face in your dealings with society. Those facts are always there, and, as a playwright friend once put it, you never know when you will round a corner and bump into them. But a person is more than the sum of her social facts. My strong suspicion is that many identity politicians see themselves as externally determined because they are strangers to themselves. They do not know themselves to be distrustful of language, say, or drawn to systems of thought, or in love with love or truly at peace in the woods. I wonder, too, if the infuriating, implacable power of the un-p.c. has moved some campus activists to mirror their enemy; to withdraw into an ethnic dorm is to mimic the fort-like, four-walled power of the institution.

Perhaps political mobilization always involves the extolling of social facts at the expense of the ever-wayward inner life. In any case, many minority writers like me, once marooned by prejudice, now find ourselves marooned again by identity politics. For the first allegiance of artists in general is to the very inner life that identity politics denies. There are writers who do cling, out of naïveté or self-interest, to the view that matters of art are untouched by issues of power—these dinosaurs are the profoundly, irrevocably un-p.c. But many other majority and minority writers who do care about diversity in the public sphere, and who do recognize the arts to be inextricably linked with society, who perhaps even explore the effects of social injustice on the heart, have nevertheless found it necessary to brand themselves anti-p.c. Identity politicians have left them no middle ground: multiculturalism has become synonymous with political correctness. Yet writers are ambivalent about this, and manifest their discomfort in odd ways—for example, as in the case of my PEN/Hemingway colleagues, by simply denying the presence of a charged social context. This leaves it largely to a handful of minority writers, committed to the inner life or not, to point out the social truths which do also obtain.

This is no fun. But the fact is that diversity remains an issue in the literary world as long as you can spend two hours at *The Atlantic Monthly* Christmas party and see just one non-white face among the hundreds of guests. I was that face last year. I had a good time anyway, and certainly felt welcome, and knew that the editors would have done anything to change matters. I understand, too, that my experience would have been similar at THE NEW REPUBLIC bash. Is it any surprise that I wonder when literary events will have a different look?

And when will the backlash against multiculturalism-as-publishing-phenomenon end? The realities of book marketing are such that a famous writer friend of mine recently lamented that she wasn't "something," as she put it. For isn't it true that in these high concept times you are either labeled or ignored? It's hard to deny. Plus, isn't there a cachet to being a minority today that seems to flow to certain writers from Benetton ads?

Yet the writers involved did not seek to be fetishized. If the label is a marketing advantage, for the labeled it remains, paradoxically and grotesquely, both pigeonhole and albatross. Younger writers are particularly vulnerable to the suspicion and resentment that fashion has brought. Their fellow writers view them as having an unfair advantage in getting published; they hasten to agree. They apologize some more. Never mind that twenty years ago they would have gotten zero attention and that the people who did get attention would not have thought to apologize for anything.

What these younger writers have to look forward to, moreover, are events like the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Book and Author Dinner, where last spring I shared a stage with former Senator Warren Rudman. I stood and read, then watched from behind the podium as Rudman, to my amazement, used for the climactic point of his book plug a story about Senator Dan Inouye. Their mutual presence at the Iran-Contra hearing segued, via the sight of Inouye's war medals, into an extended, highly emotional shtick about Inouye's heroism in World War II and the accomplishments of his unit, the 442nd. How that all-Japanese-American regiment became, in its members' bid to establish their patriotism, the most decorated unit in U.S. military history is truly a moving story—so moving, in fact, that the Japanese-American community has been struggling to get it out for fifty years. Yet there was Rudman, hawking his book with it. People were wiping their eyes as they listened, trying to stem their tears; I, meanwhile, tried to stem my groans. These were partly on the behalf of the Japanese-American community, but partly on my own behalf, too. For every time Rudman said the words "Japanese" or "Japanese-American," he turned clear around from the lectern to look, dramatically, at me. Never mind that I am Chinese-American. Never mind that no one related to me had been called on to prove his patriotism so vividly, seeing as how, in that war, China was a U.S. ally, remember? Rudman just wanted to let everyone know that he saw me and was aware of my kind; and that nowadays, goddamn it, I mattered. Whatever the hell I was. •

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The Great Helmsman steers on.

MAO MORE THAN EVER

By Jacob Heilbrunn

The first thing you hear in Shaoshan is the music, and the music is inescapable. Shaoshan is a village made up of a cluster of hamlets in a valley of the Hunan province, where, a little over a century ago, Mao Zedong was born. Loudspeakers are perched in strategic locations throughout the particular hamlet where Mao entered the world, and they endlessly emit the same tune over and over, a hit of the Cultural Revolution called "We Love You Mao." The song is set to a disco beat and sung, or rather screeched, by a woman with an especially piercing voice. Not even the chirping of birds punctuates the brief pauses between songs because there are no birds to chirp; during the Great Leap Forward, in the 1950s, the Communist Party successfully carried out a campaign to eradicate sparrows. The campaign was one of the few great triumphs of Mao's vision of harnessing the raw human power of the world's most populous nation to the organizational might of totalitarian rule. All across China, day and night, peasants banged pots and pans so that the birds would be unable to sleep and would, eventually, keel over from exhaustion.

Shaoshan is not easy to reach. Yet, in recent years, it has become one of the most popular vacation spots in China, drawing over 1 million visitors annually. Most Chinese travel to Shaoshan by train from Changsha, the capital of the Hunan province, which is located about ninety miles away. The trip takes five hours. An enormous portrait of Mao hangs over the entrance to the train station, and a fleet of about twelve tour buses waits to carry the vacationers up into the mountains to Mao's town. The buses, packed to the roof by conductors bent on squeezing the last yuan out of the trip (fuel is a precious commodity in China), take a winding trip on an unpaved road that runs past brick houses where children play in the dirt, and rows of chickens and sides of beef hang on wires in front of makeshift shops. The countryside here is a kind of Chinese version of southern Germany's Black Forest, a mountainous wilderness of pine trees, crude hovels, rice paddies and stone canals. As a lad, so the story goes, Mao toughened himself up by tramping for days with his chums through these woods and fields.

The house where Mao was born is among the finest in the village. Mao's father was a prosperous rice merchant, and he built a spacious, attractive home: eight rooms arranged around a courtyard, divided into two sections, one occupied by Mao's family and the second by another family. The Mao side of the house has yellow baked bricks and a tile roof, while the other side consists of mud bricks and a thatched roof. The house is nestled among wooded hills, in a meadow, with a pond in front. The pond was provident; in it, Mao learned to swim, or at least float—a knack that would serve him well in the future when he would demonstrate his political vitality by plunging into rivers at moments of political crisis. The house is maintained as it was when the great man was a child. There was a small vegetable garden then, to the side of the house, and there is one still, a kind of eternal cabbage memorial. Inside the house, in what was the family dining room, hang two large pictures of Mao's parents, posing in the traditional peasant garb of imperial China. Mao, who quarreled bitterly with his authoritarian father, would later remark during a visit back home that "my father died a long time ago, but had he lived to this day, he would have been classified a rich peasant and been struggled against."

The path from Mao's house into the woods leads over a hilltop and past the graves of his parents, where several elderly women in white smocks and blue trousers stand underneath umbrageous trees and before a small recessed stone alcove. The women, who hold wicker baskets filled with flowers and incense, are out to waylay tourists and to entice them into buying the blooms and scents as oblations to the memory of the helmsman's forebears. Woe to the traveler who refuses: disbelief and curses are the result. At the bottom of the hill, the peasant farms begin: houses of blackened brick set amid small, carefully cultivated fields, the smoke from kitchen fires curling lazily out of their chimneys.

Just beyond Mao's house along the main dirt road is the football-field-sized town square. To reach it, travelers must run a gauntlet of over 100 dealers peddling Mao paraphernalia, housed in three sheds running parallel to each other. Many of the visitors to Shaoshan arrive in a state of sartorial homage, wearing old-fashioned Mao suits. But the sheds are crammed with Mao accessories—everything from Mao fans to Mao cups, from Mao watches to Mao T-shirts. The square,

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dominated by a fifty-foot-high gray statue of Mao reading from a great scroll, is jammed most days with tourists shopping in between visits to the Mao Memorial Museum and to the nearby Dishui Cave, where Mao sat under a waterfall for thirteen days in 1966 and dreamed up new slogans for the Cultural Revolution. Some of those slogans have been etched in large gold lettering onto stone tablets along the path to the waterfall. The People's Liberation Army, which houses its troops in barracks near the caves, has figured out how to turn a yuan off its propinquity to greatness: the soldiers run a nice little business selling photographs of tourists posing with a cardboard cutout of Mao in front of the waterfall. The cardboard Mao is particularly popular with wedding parties.

Mao's village has the feel about it that all tourist spots do: it is fun and tacky and full of energy. Young men zip around the square on motorbikes, their girlfriends perched behind. The soldiers sometimes amuse themselves by lobbing grenades into a reservoir near Dishui Cave; the grenades explode underwater with a satisfying dull thump and throw up small geysers. On a recent visit, during the Lunar New Year, the square was carpeted with spent red bottle rockets and firecrackers shot off by exuberant worshipers before Mao's statue.

MAO ZEDONG BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

When I set off from Shanghai to visit Shaoshan, I did not expect to find a place doing such bustling good business in homage to the old communist dictator. That sort of spirit is supposed to be gone in the new, capitalist China, and in Shanghai it certainly feels as if this is so. Shanghai has again become an entrepôt for foreign businesses in China, and it roars with the excitement of new, fast money. The business center resembles Manhattan in its glassy glitter and tireless hustle. Much of the city's population seems to play the stock market, and every week another city block is wiped out to make room for new skyscrapers. Thoughts of Mao, or of ideological purity, could not appear further from consciousness. But there were some clues here and there that suggested otherwise. One occurred in December 1996, when there was an auction in Beijing of porcelain and artwork created for Mao during the Cultural Revolution. To general astonishment, works that would have been considered worthless a few years ago fetched prices in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

What did this mean? To many China watchers, nothing. China has for several years been in the grip of a craze for Mao artifacts—Mao buttons, pens and ceramic busts—that seems motivated as much by a passion for kitsch as for Mao himself. The veteran China reporter Orville Schell has argued that the Mao phenomenon might even be taken as an augury of democracy, a sign that China was reaching some penultimate stage of de-Maoification: in the December 1992 *Atlantic Monthly*, Schell wrote that the commercialization of Mao meant that he was "slowly being stripped of his imperial quality, of his ability to evoke either awe or fear." But the Mao craze is not just about nostalgia, and it does portend something, but what it portends is not what the China experts think.

Western attitudes—and American policy—toward China are based on the belief that China is a nation in chrysalis, ready to burst out of its totalitarian larval stage into a lovely democracy. Essential to this belief is the idea that China has de-Maoed itself—has buried Mao, as Russia buried Stalin, and Germany Hitler.

In fact, the opposite is true. Mao Zedong remains the central, dominant figure in Chinese political culture: he is still an imperial presence; he is still revered; he is, even, still cool. The evidence is everywhere in China. In a 1994 poll, 40 percent of Chinese respondents picked Mao as their favorite leader, compared to less than 10 percent for Deng Xiaoping. "Today Chinese youths don't know or take seriously Mao's mistakes," Yan Jiaqi, a former member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told *Asiaweek*. "They think he was a great leader. They only know Deng's mistakes." In the countryside, new and massive temples have been built to

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Mao in the Fujian and Guangdong provinces, and another temple is under construction in the northern Shaanxi province of Gushuicun. The temples are frequented by party officials and peasants who believe Mao can do everything from cure illnesses to guarantee a good crop. In 1993, several workers at a Sichuan factory committed suicide on the one-hundredth anniversary of Mao's birth—they were convinced they would join him in an afterlife. Taxicab drivers in Beijing and Shanghai dangle Mao's portrait from their rearview mirrors. Artists are incorporating Mao's image into their works, and a gigantic portrait of Mao still looms over Tiananmen Square. And, most importantly, in the party and in the universities, the fashionable political philosophy isn't democracy; it's the new Maoism.

Mao hasn't made a comeback. He never left. Unlike Germany or Russia, China has never made an attempt to confront its past; it never tried to engage in de-Maoification. The Communist Party has resisted any attempts to confront either the horrors of the late 1950s Great Leap Forward, when a Mao-made famine took tens of millions of Chinese lives, or those of the Cultural Revolution, in which state-sanctioned barbarity reached the nadir of encouraging cannibalism among school children. Efforts to speak the truth about these matters are squelched: when, for example, the Shanghai University journal *Society* stated in 1993 that 40 million had perished in Mao's famine, that issue of the magazine was instantly recalled.

What informs China's politics is what has informed it for the last fifty years: a philosophy that mixes nationalism and communism and that is built upon the legend of Mao as founding father. It is impossible for party leaders to tear down the plinth of Mao without toppling all that rests above. Instead, the party has opted for equivocation. In 1981, party scholars acknowledged that Mao had made "gross mistakes," but also lauded his record as "seventy percent positive." As Deng Xiaoping put it at the time, "If we go overboard and blacken comrade Mao Zedong, we'll be blackening our party and our country." But there is more to it than the desire of aging communists to hang on to power and legitimacy. Even more fundamentally, Mao cannot be overturned because he was not a Marxist of the Western variety, but a leader who behaved above all like a classic Chinese emperor. Mao led a nationalist peasant movement to create a single nation-state that was rooted in the patrimonial traditions of the Chinese empire. He, his revolution and his philosophy did not represent a break with the past but, rather, an extension of the past: another epoch in China's struggle against the West.

The West, for its part, misperceived Chinese realities then, as it does today. After Deng Xiaoping died, most foreign leaders and commentators, such as Henry Kissinger, eulogized him as a progressive who had broken with the Maoist path to lead China into a capitalist, increasingly democratic, future. President Clinton, in a news conference, went so far as to state that both Russia and China were "former communist" countries. A closer look at the Mao phenomenon, however, suggests that, as the Communist Party modernizes China, it is not rejecting the Great Helmsman but integrating him into the broader sweep of Chinese history. Mao is no longer merely a communist ideologue; now he is an emperor.

"Chairman Mao was greater than George Washington and Abraham Lincoln put together," Liu, a 33-year-old linguistics scholar, declared as our pre-World War II train crawled from Changsha to Shaoshan. It was a local train, which meant that it offered only "hardseats," wooden benches, as opposed to the more expensive "softseats"—cushioned single seats. The grimy carriage was filled with vacationers, peasants and pensioners, hunched, packed figures seen dimly through a blue haze of cigarette smoke. Liu, who was dressed informally in a brown leather jacket and slacks, was visiting Shaoshan for the fourth time with his girlfriend. In between cracking peanuts, he held forth for hours on the innate superiority of Chinese civilization to the white race. "We Chinese are smarter because we exercise a certain part of brain by using chopsticks," he said, repeating a phrase that is even used in official textbooks for teaching foreigners Chinese. Curious to see how far his devotion went, I asked him about Mao. "I worship Mao," he responded. "Just look at Mao's poetry—superb. His calligraphy was extraordinary, and he was the greatest general of all time." But what about Mao's economic policies? Liu was unfazed. It was the West, he said, that had prevented Mao from implementing the reforms that are now being carried out. "Don't get involved in a land war in Asia," he admonished. "If you Americans come here to fight, we will destroy you with our vast army and Mao Zedong thought."

Shaoshan is only one stop on the pilgrimage trail for devotees like Liu. Another destination is the city of Changsha, where Mao moved in 1911, at the age of 18, and where he learned politics. Mao had read widely in the Chinese classics and had been influenced by the writings of reformers such as Kang Youwei. But he was still a hick when he arrived in Changsha.

Like Shaoshan, Changsha is filled with Mao statues, parks and historical landmarks. Just off the main boulevard is a "People's Park"; at the entrance, a portrait of Mao—in a brown civilian uniform and posed against a shoreline—is perched against a boulder and ringed by flowers and ferns. Inside the park is an exact replica of Tiananmen Square, which Mao had ordered built after 1949, along with a walled art exhibition filled with works by Chinese army artists chronicling Mao's greatest feats. A man in his early 60s who had his granddaughter in tow was proudly explaining to her the various stages in the communist revolution depicted in the paintings. Mao, he told her, was "a great leader who unified China."

The schoolhouse where Mao studied in Changsha also deifies him. A fifty-foot-high portrait of Mao as a Christ-like figure, complete with acolytes at his feet, is at

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the center of the school's auditorium. The beautiful French colonial-style building with its colonnades and courtyards seemed like an unlikely spot for a budding anti-Western revolutionary, but Changsha in the early years of the century was swirling with revolutionary movements. These currents were not Marxist; what animated the students at Changsha was a spirit of revolutionary nationalism rooted more in China's past than in Europe's present. Mao was shaped by an intellectual culture that drew on traditional Chinese literature and history. As Mao's doctor, Li Zhisui, writes in *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, "I am convinced that the intrigues in China's imperial courts were a far more powerful influence on his thought than Marxism-Leninism. True, Mao was a revolutionary.... But he turned to the past for instruction on how to rule, for guidance on how to manipulate the conspiracies...."

The idea of using Western ideas and inventions against the West was at its zenith in those days. In the wake of the famous May 4, 1919, demonstrations in Beijing, calls for modernity and patriotism, science and democracy, gained currency among intellectuals. Feudalism and imperialism were to be swept aside by embracing modernity. "Lurking behind the scenes," as Tu Wei-ming has pointed out in the winter 1996 issue of *Daedalus*, "was neither science nor democracy but scientism and populism.... [I]nstrumental rationality and Jacobin-like collectivism fundamentally restructured the Chinese intellectual world in the post-May Fourth period." Reformers, such as Liang Qichao, who edited a clandestine journal, were influenced by a debased but popular version of Darwin and Spencer. They saw race war as the key to progress. In this regard, it was the great Chinese revolutionary and nationalist Sun Yat-sen who decisively influenced Mao. Sun held that the Chinese had to embrace nationalism in order to defeat the Western powers, and he preached a doctrine of political Darwinism: "although natural forces work slowly, yet they can exterminate great races."

As a young organizer for the communists in Hunan in the early 1920s, Mao supported Sun, who was the patriarch of the Kuomintang (KMT). Sun created a temporary alliance between his nationalist party and the communists, and, in 1926, Mao was even briefly given control of the KMT's propaganda department. But Mao soon moved beyond the philosophy of Sun. The problem that both the Marxists and Chiang Kai-shek's Nanjing government (1928-37) faced was that they were unable to tap into a mass nationalist following. Mao's insight was to sinicize Marxism. As the political scientist Chalmers Johnson first showed in 1962, Mao successfully integrated Marxism and peasant nationalism to forge a potent anti-Western weapon. Unlike in Russia, Marxism in China was reinterpreted as an anti-Western revolt. Lenin believed that upheavals would spread from Russia throughout Europe; Mao, who never traveled abroad, believed from the outset in a kind of "socialism in one country" that would unite China, drive out foreign oppressors and restore the dignity and honor of the middle kingdom.

To realize his dream of a new dynasty, Mao believed he had to raze the existing Chinese civilization. The razing was as horrific as anything ever recorded in history. One place the horrors are not recorded is in the museums of Shaoshan. There, a twenty-foot silver statue of Mao that stands at the entrance to the Mao museum is as untarnished as the record of Mao's life that is presented inside. The obligatory pictures of Mao's associates from the 1920s and 1930s line the walls of the first room to the left along with a glass-enclosed miniature of the web of mountain lairs that the communists inhabited during the "Yenan" period. As the exhibit progresses there are pictures of Mao at the Bandung conference, surrounded by beaming Africans. It closes with a relief of Mao lying in state, as he does still in a crystal sarcophagus in Tiananmen Square. The relief is made of cheap white plastic, lit from above and behind by a yellow light that makes Mao look sallow and wan.

Absent in the museum is any mention of either the 1950s Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution. In both events, however, Shaoshan itself played a critical role for Mao's thinking. In creating his own unique amalgam of peasant nationalism and communism, Mao relied on visits to the countryside to assess his "reforms" and to outflank the Communist Party bureaucracy. During the Great Leap Forward, from 1958 to 1962, Mao had attempted to collectivize the peasantry and ended up with a mass famine. In the afternoon of June 25, 1959, confronted with reports of crop failures, Mao traveled from Changsha to Shaoshan for the first time since 1927. Strolling through the town, Mao was surprised to see that his mother's old Buddhist shrine had vanished; in desperation, the villagers had used the wood as fuel. After meeting with the villagers, Mao received more bad news. Fistfights were breaking out in the communal dining halls as everyone lunged for a few scraps of food. Mao backed off his utopian plan. "If you cannot produce good steel, you might as well quit," he declared. Shaoshan quit. But the quitting did not last. A few weeks later, at a critical party meeting in Lushan, Mao faced down the incipient revolt of Defense Minister Peng Dehuai, and the terror and the starvation continued on schedule.

Shaoshan also played a key role in Mao's actions during the Cultural Revolution, but only the most oblique reference to this period is to be found in Shaoshan. In a small museum adjacent to Mao's house, a black-and-white TV set flickers before a row of wooden banked seats. The narrator ecstatically describes the progress of Mao's trip back to Shaoshan in the midst of the Cultural Revolution in 1966; the grainy film shows him in a snow-white shirt, walking slowly as he is mobbed by hysterical young girls chanting his name. Mao smiles beatifically and soaks in the adulation without speaking. The film goes on to show him in his swim trunks, bobbing in the pond in front of his house, while the adula-

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tory villagers look on. While Beijing descended into chaos, Mao rested in the Dishui Cave and composed poems.

Even after the dénouement of the Cultural Revolution—the humiliation of Mao's wife and the other members of the Gang of Four—the cult of Mao lived. Although veneration had, for the time being, receded among the Chinese people, the party continued to occupy itself intellectually with Maoism. Two main groups emerged, Maoist fundamentalists (*fanshipai*) and nostalgists (*huanyuanpai*) who yearned for the golden age of the 1950s. The party Maoists kept the faith alive, but, with the barbarity of the Cultural Revolution still fresh in familial memories, they could not much fan it openly. For the nationalist-communist philosophy of Maoism to blossom fully again, there needed to appear a threat to China, an event that would awaken among the people the resting fear that China might lose its greatness, might fall prey to the depredations of the West. This event occurred on June 4, 1989, when Chinese troops mowed down student protesters at Tiananmen Square. In the wake of Tiananmen, the idea of China descending into chaos and collapse prompted the party to revive the idea of class struggle. Deng Xiaoping declared that the United States was fomenting revolution and initiated an "anti-rightist" purge of the party itself. The students, Deng said in a speech to Martial Law Command troops in Beijing, were the tools of "neo-imperialists," and they were attempting to "establish a totally Westernized republic." Jiang Zemin announced in an address on the fortieth anniversary of the PRC that "class struggle will continue to exist within certain parameters, and it will even be exacerbated under certain conditions." In August 1993, Jiang fulminated that "some forces in the West have never relaxed their peaceful-evolution plot against China." China, Jiang said, would continue to pursue economic reforms, but no one should be deluded that democratization would take place. Under Jiang's supervision, the party has promoted "thought reform" in the countryside and carried out Maoist-style education campaigns.

It is worrisome—or it should be—that perhaps the most virulent of the newly empowered Maoists and exponents of a crusade against the West are the associates of China's premier, Li Peng. One is He Xin, a former literary critic who became an adviser to Li Peng on international affairs in 1990. He is an advocate of what he calls a "New Cold War." In a paper that, according to Willy Wo-Lap Lam's excellent *China: After Deng Xiaoping*, "received wide circulation within the leadership in January and February 1991," He Xin charged that after the victory in the Gulf war the United States would establish a new hegemony in Asia. Drawing on Maoist war economics, He Xin declared that China had to examine economic construction in light of a probable war with the United States and stated that "the U.S. has decided that it must thoroughly destroy the existing order of China and retool China's power."

Another Li Peng associate who is a leading Mao revivalist is State Council Research Office Director Yuan Mu, who has publicly denounced Deng's democratic reforms for creating "the inundation of bourgeois liberalization." Li Peng himself recently declared that the Cultural Revolution was not a disaster and that the Chinese should regard it with "an overall and correct perspective."

Much of the firepower for these attempts to restore Maoism has come from a group of young intellectuals clustered around party elder Deng Liqun. These Marxist fundamentalists control the *People's Daily*, the ministry of propaganda and numerous journals such as *Seeking Truth*. These intellectuals were responsible for Jiang Zemin's 1991 report "Against Peaceful Transformation of Socialism." In 1995 and 1996, they issued two "ten-thousand-word documents" calling for a return to class struggle and Maoism. Su Shaozhi, the president of the Princeton China Initiative, has written in *Freedom Review* that the fundamentalists may be able to pull along Jiang, given his leftist tendencies, and that they "enjoy important positions in the party, an abundance of funds and conditions under which they can openly promote their ideas and programs." Not to be overlooked is another group that takes an even more virulent anti-American line: the young nationalists in the party known as "red capitalists." Finally, there are popular nationalist books such as *China Can Say No* and *Viewing China Through a Fourth Eye*, by Wang Shen, which says that China should "replace communism with nationalism."

And what the Chinese call the "Mao craze" is not confined to party elders and hacks. In Shanghai, I talked about Mao with a woman, a medical doctor in her 40s. When I alluded to Mao's criminal behavior, she was utterly perplexed. She saw him as a magnificent leader. Maoist nationalism was popular, even among the young and hip. Near Fudan University, I dropped by the Tribesman Pub off of Huangxin Road, where American rock music was blaring and students dressed in chic sweaters and suits were drinking pricey foreign beers and dancing. One of the hippie bartenders grinned uneasily when he learned I was from the United States; he then informed me that Beijing should "invade Taiwan." Even if the Taiwanese didn't want to be reunited? He looked annoyed for a second. "They should want it," he responded.

On my last evening in Shaoshan, it seemed only fitting to dine at the Mao restaurant. I sat underneath a huge portrait of the man himself and dined on Mao's favorite spicy Hunanese dishes of fatty pork and bitter melon, while firecrackers and small grenades resounded into the night. "Business is booming," the diminutive owner told me as he crouched next to the wobbly round table. "Ever since the hundredth anniversary of Mao in 1993, we've been getting more and more tourists from all over China." When I left, early the next morning, the tourists hadn't arrived, but the loudspeakers were already being cranked up. As the minibus headed for Changsha, the strains of "We Love You Mao" followed us out of Shaoshan. •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

Ordinary people

The most remarkable thing about last week's ascension of thirty-nine souls to what they have described as the "Next Level" via a UFO is not the strangeness of their religious beliefs, but the extraordinary response that the event triggered. For days the media have been saturated with stories about the group, its leaders and adherents, its eschatology and the most minute details of its behavior and living arrangements. Newspapers have felt the need to take editorial positions on the issue—invariably bristling with self-righteous denunciation—while TV and radio repeat the story endlessly, like a mantra.

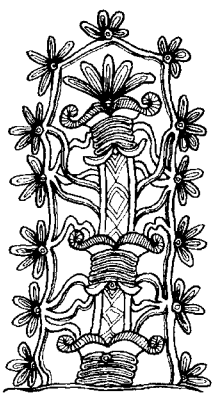
The media highlighted the story, figuring it would fascinate, and even touch, the public deeply. In that they were right, even though they rarely understood, or even tried to investigate, why. What they did do, interestingly, was seek to distance themselves as far as possible from the group's professed beliefs, as if they feared contamination. Even more, they assured the public that the group's religious beliefs were so bizarre that they must be considered lunatic. An editorial in *The New York Times*, for instance, proclaimed that it was the "rantings of a madman" that led his "wounded, foolish followers" to their demise. On "60 Minutes," Lesley Stahl was openly disdainful as two former members of the group expressed sympathy for the teachings of their onetime leader.

What is the reason for this deep hostility, matched by an equal, if not greater, fascination? It cannot be, despite assertions to the contrary, that there is something particularly unique or bizarre about the group's religious beliefs. These beliefs are, after all, firmly rooted in Christian theology, especially in early gnosticism.

The group's members believed that the soul was separate and superior to the body, that those who followed their spiritual leader and observed his teachings would be saved, and that they should transcend their attachment to money, sex and family life—all of which can be found in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The media seemed particularly fascinated by the fact that some of the men voluntarily chose to be castrated in order to release themselves from the bondage of sexual desire. Stahl even triumphantly announced, as if taking personal credit for the event, that one of the former members of the group was soon to become a father. But one does not have to dig very deeply into Christian belief to find discussion of impurity and mortification of the flesh, let alone celibacy for Catholic priests. TV evangelists proclaim (but don't practice) the flesh-hatred of self-flagellating medieval monks. And the notion that the true believer will ascend to heaven, whether on the wings of angels or a spaceship (the modern equivalent), was no doubt something that the thirty-nine seekers learned as children in Sunday school.

Christianity teaches that sipping wine and nibbling a wafer is, in the proper circumstances, equivalent to drinking the blood and eating the flesh of Christ, that Jesus was born to a woman impregnated by the spirit of God rather than by the messy intercession of sexual congress, that he could cure lepers and feed vast multitudes with two fish and five loaves of bread, and that following his death he would ascend to heaven corporally as well as spiritually intact. Yet the beliefs of this religion, with its millions of adherents worldwide, are not routinely described in the media as "bizarre." Nor is Christianity described as a "cult." For what is a cult but a collection of believers, like the early Christians, who have not yet achieved dominant status?



This is not, be assured, to denigrate Christianity. Every religion is "bizarre" for those who do not accept its strictures or practice its tenets. Indeed, one could say that is the whole point of religions: they offer solace, explain mysteries, provide standards of behavior and offer the promise of escape to a better world. The Heaven's Gate group would appear to be particularly benign, and even praiseworthy, in that its members were gentle, industrious, supportive and kind to one another. They did not try to coerce others into joining them. All they asked was to be left alone.

But what about the mass suicide? Does this not indicate the group's "underlying pathology," as many in the press insisted? Not necessarily these days. Don't many Americans now believe that suicide is preferable to suffering from terminal illness? Nation-states and organized religions condemn suicide because it depletes their pool of adherents. But does this make it a "pathology"?

In its editorial denunciation of the group, the *Times* explained that, although mainstream faiths believe in "resurrection, the meaninglessness of the flesh, the primacy of the spirit, the conversion from the physical to the heavenly plane," they are superior because the "believer himself cannot choose the moment of ascension," only the "central deity" can. But in war, the true believer in most faiths has little compunction about deciding the moment of ascension for his infidel enemy. Does that put murder on a higher plane of morality than suicide? Those who engage in what theologians call "just wars" are blessed, while those who commit suicide are deemed to be damned or at least "pathological."

While the media are not interested in these philosophical questions, they have, in their own inchoate way, reflected the public's fascination with this ardent group of gentle souls who came together to seek fulfillment through belief, work and companionship. Neither violent nor lazy nor acquisitive, they practiced virtues that society preaches but prefers neither to observe nor reward. They separated themselves, insofar as they could, from both the intrusive state and the omnipresent culture of consumerism. They did not openly defy these powerful forces so much as seek to live removed from their demands.

In this they are not greatly different from another millennial group, the Shakers, who also professed celibacy, communal ownership, pacifism, separation from the world, equality of the sexes and freedom to leave the collective. This desire to achieve separation from a corrupt society, whether physically, as in the communes of Vermont and the enclaves of Montana, or spiritually, as in the multitude of religious sects that abound in ever greater numbers, is an undeniable force in American life. As the state and the mass culture become increasingly pervasive and demanding, so people, individually or in groups, are drawn to alternatives.

That is why this story has such resonance among Americans, and why the mass media's hostility is not reflected in the millions who see something of their own unfulfilled longings in these searchers. How striking it is that those who knew them—whether former group members or simply neighbors or employers—were not harsh in their judgments. Said one woman who had rented office space to them: "They were such happy people."

RONALD STEEL

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Collision Course

A large airplane hangar, with planes but no visible people. The camera moves along the fuselage of a small plane until it comes to a young woman standing next to the plane, staring at it raptly. Then she bares her breasts and presses them against the plane with deep pleasure. The camera, descending to floor level, sees a man approach her from behind and engage her sexually. She complies. We never see the man's face, and neither does she: she says later that she didn't know who he was.

Thus begins **Crash** (Fine Line)—a scene typical of very much that follows, except that most of the later sex, with the man embracing from behind, takes place in cars and the partners know each other. All this car sex is related to car accidents and is stimulated by them.

Few of us can have missed the blizzard of interviews with David Cronenberg, the 54-year-old Canadian who adapted *Crash* from a novel by J.G. Ballard and directed it. Cronenberg, a specialist in highly polished *frisson* fests like *Dead Ringers* and *Naked Lunch*, apparently enjoys explaining that his mission here was to examine "post-nuclear, post-technology people." But he understates his objective: he does more.

Crash is the ultimate X-ray version of all the race car films ever made and of all the thousands of car chases in other films. *Crash* tries to extract and dramatize what lies beneath all that surface action. The automobile is an empowerment; it gives every driver, if he wants it—even if she wants it—a sense of empire, of ego balm for life's mistreatments, of magnified phallic thrust. In this film, for instance, when there's a mating game between two speeding automobiles, one driven by a man, one by a woman, as they pass and tease and threaten each other, we can see that this is only 1997 candor about instincts that were tickled when Henry Ford began.

Cronenberg adds a brutally logical conclusion to this duel. The woman runs off the road and is thrown from her car unconscious; the man goes to her and proceeds to have sex with her, during which she recovers, pleased. (We can assume that if she had been killed, he would have had sex with as much of her as was available. Later this man has sex with an incision on the thigh of another woman who has been maimed in a car crash.)

The film has no story: it's a series of scenes thematically connected. The central people are the young woman of the first scene (Deborah Kara Unger) and her husband (James Spader), who have an open marriage. They are successful professionals in a large city (unnamed, but the film was shot in Toronto) who confide in each other about extramarital exploits. Both get involved with a "scientist" (Elias Koteas) who is studying the erotics of car accidents and who makes icons of the James Dean and Jayne Mansfield crashes. He has a companion (Rosanna Arquette) whose legs are in braces because of a smash. Also hanging about is a doctor who specializes in accidents (Holly Hunter). These people arrange themselves in various sexual combinations, including homosexual ones, as they explore their fetishes.

The only significant acting that the cast is asked to deliver is the simulation of sex. (We can wonder what the screen tests were like.) Yet none of the sex is really explicit, although there is plenty of nudity, all female. As in most "frank" pictures made by men, we never see a penis.

Inevitably *Crash* has been called pornographic, not because of the sex itself but because of the linkage of sex with maiming and the maimed. But this is not its true link with pornography. None of the people in the film is realized as a character: Cronenberg has no interest in character. Each person is given a dab of characteristics and is then sent off to copulate. As with pornography, individuation is not the point: the sex act itself is all—in this case, related to car carnage.

This depersonalization is intrinsic to Cronenberg's design. He certainly has a cinematic gift, and he devotes it to his concept—not people but a sort of horrific glandular ballet with a cast of mere physical entities. With the help of Peter Suschitzky's "underwater" lighting and Howard Shore's gauzy music, Cronenberg keeps this masochistic phantasmagoria afloat.

The masochism is necessarily ex post facto. The idea that people seek out crashes for sexual thrills is a mite debatable: How can they be sure they'll survive to enjoy the results? But the Cronenberg-Ballard view that the accident, if sur-

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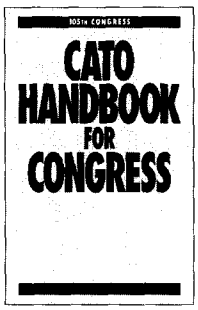

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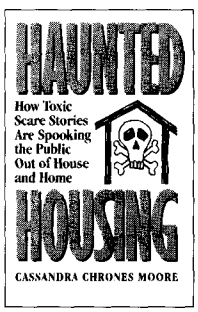

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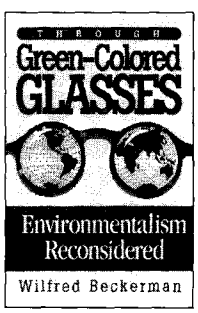

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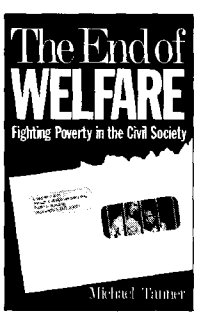

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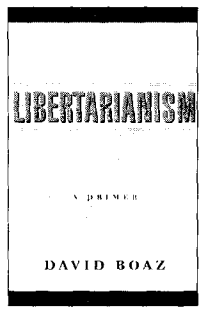

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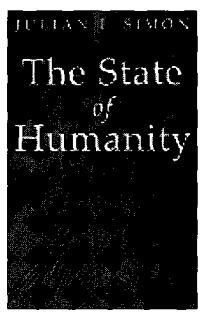

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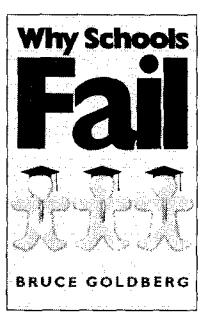

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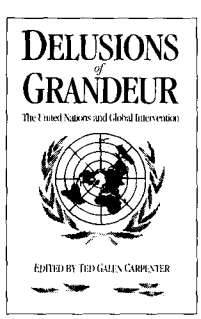

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vived, brings to fulfillment the eroticism of the speeding car—that idea, grotesque as it is, is disturbing. Somewhere deep in our civilized selves, *Crash* touches a small deviltry we thought we had discarded when we grew up.

Last week a worry about a plethora of films on the Irish troubles. This week another such film. **The Devil's Own** (Columbia) is set mostly in and around New York, but it starts—bloodily—in Northern Ireland; New York is the scene of the consequence. An IRA activist steeped in violence, Brad Pitt, is sent here to buy missiles. Through friends, he is lodged in the home of a New York cop, Harrison Ford, an Irish-American with a wife and three young daughters. Ford knows nothing of the IRA connection: he thinks Pitt is just another Irish lad come to America for a job.

Of course there are difficulties about the missile deal, or there would be no film, and those difficulties eventually invade Ford's home. As in all fiercely realistic thrillers, the action becomes less and less credible as it speeds on. (At the end Pitt sets out to cross the Atlantic alone in a boat about the size of a tug. His navigational qualifications? He's the son of a fisherman.) But, as with some such thrillers, we tolerate the incredible as the price of the pulse-quickening.

The director, Alan J. Pakula, who made *All the President's Men* and many others, knows how to move things along. The cinematographer, Gordon Willis, who did all three *Godfather* films and some of Woody Allen's, knows how to perceive Manhattan. Pitt, equipped with a Belfast brogue, gives quite a decent account of himself, now that he's relieved of the need to be another Brando or James Dean. This is Ford's second encounter with IRA plottings; the first was *Patriot Games*. He is as likable as ever, but he has reached the age where the physical strain of fights and chases makes us feel sorry that this nice mature fellow is being put to all this bother.

Politically, *The Devil's Own* is one-sided, like all previous films on the troubles. The only one I know that is on the loyalist side is last week's *Nothing Personal*. For plenty of reasons, I don't begin to judge the two sides. What bothers me is the assumption of every film on this topic that its point of view is incontestable and that the audience will agree. This present screenplay, developed from a story by Kevin Jarre, gives us small hint of the political motives of the IRA and no hint at all as to why others have opposing motives. These assumptions—that the motives need no explanation or context—are helping to harden Irish-trouble films into a mere genre. This is regrettable, I'd say, for the very sake of the politics involved. •

Art, history, and the new museums.

Representing Indians

By Richard White

Americans have long collected Indian objects and artifacts. Now they are collecting the products of Indian painters and sculptors as art. And like their patrons, museums have gradually shifted the emphasis of their Indian collections from ethnography to art. This change, by no means complete, is another expression, a very important expression, of the shifting valence of Indian peoples in American culture.

Museums are more than the sum of their collections; they are social institutions, and they respond to social change. When they change the nature of their displays, something more than a trend in curatorial taste is usually going on. And in regard to Indians, the museums are definitely changing. The venerable Peabody Museum in Harvard redid its Native American Collections in 1990, and numerous other museums across the country are redesigning their exhibits away from the old anthropological emphases. But the interest in Indian art is best seen in the newer museums. The George Gustave Heye Collection has become the core of the new National Museum of the American Indian, which, while awaiting a permanent home on the Mall in Washington, D.C., currently shows its treasures at the Custom House in New York. The Eugene and Clare Thaw Collection, assembled since 1987, has acquired a handsome new wing at the New York State Historical Association Fenimore House Museum in Cooperstown. These collections, new and old, are doubly important, for the aesthetically stunning objects that they display and for the cultural tensions involved in their display.

Masterpieces of American Indian Art from the Eugene and Clare Thaw Collection
(Harry N. Abrams, 96 pp., $19.95)

All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture
(Smithsonian Institution Press, in conjunction with the National Museum of the American Indian, 224 pp., $29.95)

Some of these collections originated when Indian peoples were at the center of one of the most prolonged deathbed scenes in American history. Call it the Age of the Vanishing Indian. It was never entirely clear, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whether Indian peoples themselves or only their cultures were doomed to vanish, but the ambiguity did not deter the collecting of memorabilia to commemorate the departing and the departed. The anthropologist Franz Boas and his students sought to record cultures before they disappeared, even as government policies hurried their disappearance. Private collectors and museums acquired material artifacts, some of which were connected with practices and ceremonies that conquest had rendered impossible or that governments had prohibited. Many gorgeous Northwest Coast ceremonial masks, for example, found their way into the hands of collectors after the Canadian government confiscated them as a means of enforcing its ban on potlatch ceremonies.

But the departing never quite departed. Indians kept rising from their deathbed. By 1920, the population of Indian peoples had begun to rebound. From a low of about a quarter of a million people, the combined Indian, Aleut and Eskimo population has risen to over 2 million people today. And the most overt cultural repression had eased by the 1930s. Indian peoples are currently in the midst of a cultural and political resurgence, and they, too, are interested in the museums. Some are seeking to reclaim the pieces of these collections that they consider plundered; others want to influence the curatorial taste according to which these collections are deployed as representations of their cultures.

"Representation" has become a fashionable academic word. It is a complex word (re-present) that possesses multiple meanings (to make an image of, to stand in for, to speak for). It is a useful

Richard White is a professor of history at the University of Washington.

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word for talking about the new National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), which attempts to offer what it considers to be representative images of Indian peoples, in the sense of presenting them and their cultures to the American people of whom they are a part, while at the same time representing Indians in the sense of speaking for them. According to Richard West, the head of the NMAI, one of the goals of the Custom House exhibit and its catalog is to add Indian voices to "this body of cultural representation."

Indians, of course, are iconic. We create popular images of Indians to fit the times. And gradually a softer and gentler Indian—a New Age Indian—has replaced the more martial and stoic Indian of the nineteenth century. The movie *Dances With Wolves* crystallized this new image, but it played upon things already much in the air: Indians as the "first environmentalists," Indians as spiritual seers, Indians as artists. Needless to say, these fashionable brands of Indianness do not usually translate into an interest in actual, existing, contemporary Indians. Indian peoples have survived, but in popular representations of them the Age of the Vanishing Indian has also survived. And it gets still more complicated. In their representation of themselves, many Indian people have themselves embraced a romantic vision of a sacred past. And others strain against an overly pious and ahistorical vision, and seek to emphasize the modern and adaptive strains in Indian cultures.

Which brings us back to the pots, and robes, and masks, and pipes, and garments, and ritual objects that were accumulated while the Indians were vanishing, and to the even wider range of material accumulated since. As much as the objects in them, the new galleries are themselves fascinating cultural products. In them we can witness the movement of Indians across American culture. Once Indians were nature. Now they are culture (the most natural of cultures). Early collections were housed in museums of natural history; the collections that came slightly later were displayed in ethnological museums; and the latest collections are displayed in museums of art.

The tensions that arise from collecting and displaying Indian art are most obvious in the Custom House exhibit. The category "Indian," like the category "white" or the category "African American," is a cultural and historical creation whose meaning is contestable and unstable. Who counts as an Indian? It is a very real question. And who decides what "Indian" culture consists of—how a Navajo, as an "Indian," could in any sense speak for an Iroquois, or what Iroquois voice is authoritative? This, too, is not at all clear. And beyond this, ancestry and identity are not the same thing as knowledge of the past or of the particular artifacts of the past that end up in museums. Identity does not bestow knowledge. Identity is itself a contestable and unstable notion. The false claims of earlier generations of scholars and curators are not necessarily corrected by replacing them with Indian voices.

One way of treating the contested versions of Indianness is to put the contest itself on exhibit. "Multivocal" and "diversity" are the terms that museums use to signal that much of what is presented as authoritative is sometimes not at all authoritative. These terms do not, as some conservative critics think, amount to an abdication of all standards, nor do they adopt a hopeless relativism; but they *are* slippery. One person's diversity can be another's cacophony and another's incoherence. "Multivocal" exhibits can end up as confused and confusing. And the dangers of equating identity with authority are apparent in the NMAI exhibit at the Custom House: "All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture."

What is going on here? This is the question that instantly arises in the Custom House exhibit. It has been curated by "twenty-three native people from throughout the Western Hemisphere," in the words of Richard West, "who were invited to the museum to make selections from our collections and to tell you in their own unfiltered voices why this cultural patrimony is important to them and how it reflects and defines their cultural realities." These are, West insists, "the essential voices of native peoples." They certainly are voices of native peoples. But "essential voices"? Who says?

The exhibit is unusual and thought-provoking, particularly if viewers know something about Indian life and culture before they walk through. Above all, however, the exhibit is uneven. It is full of surprising insights and flashes of wit, and it presents things that you would otherwise have missed because the items have been arranged and explained by experienced people with skilled and subtle eyes. It is also full of surprising silences and some astonishing statements of fact. That human scalps decorate some of the objects goes unmentioned in some of the exhibit's labels. One label claims, on the other hand, that in the 1850s the Lakotas had lost

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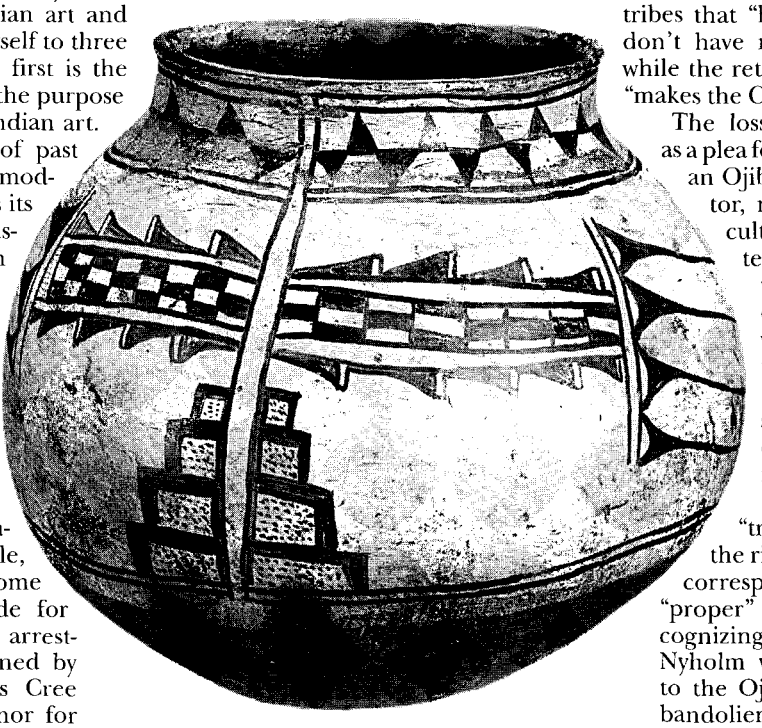
the ability to hunt buffalo and wage war; but this would come as news to the Pawnees and other tribes who were losing their buffalo grounds to Sioux warriors.

The twenty-three curators of the Custom House exhibit are not just "Indians," they are also professional curators, artists, artisans, tribal politicians and, for lack of a better phrase, culture workers who make their living in reviving, maintaining or advocating tribal cultures and practices; and in places their attempts to represent "authentic" Indians produces versions of Indian cultures at least as dubious as anything that non-Indian exhibits devise. It would be tedious to discuss all the ways in which these curators deploy and interpret the Heye Collection's rich hoard of Indian art and artifacts, so I will confine myself to three areas and approaches. The first is the NMAI's use of its artifacts for the purpose of creating contemporary Indian art. The second is its tracing of past decline in order to inspire a modern renascence. The third is its presentation of objects to illustrate a history of interaction and innovation.

Using artifacts to create art is the favored tactic of the NMAI's artist/curators. The signature display at the Custom House is a collection of moccasins, arranged in a circle, the left foot of each pair slightly raised as in a dance. The moccasins themselves—some simple, some intricately beaded, some made for men, some made for women and children—are arresting. The display was designed by Gerald McMaster, a Plains Cree from Canada, as a "metaphor for the diversity and creativity of indigenous peoples" and for the idea of "multiple perspectives, which is so central to this project."

McMaster is an artist using the products of craftswomen to make art of a particularly didactic sort. He is trying to use "products of the past ... to point to the future ... to help define our humanity on the earth." He has an eye for form, but he does not know a great deal about the objects that he uses. He connects them only with "tradition" or with "Mother Earth," the latter a transcultural construction that many scholars think did not become very significant among Indian peoples until the twentieth century. McMaster's exhibit, as interesting as parts of it are, turns out to be more about himself than about the objects that he displays, or the artists and artisans who created them, or the cultural traditions in which they worked. And this seems quite consciously done. McMaster is countering one tradition of image-making—the European construction of the Noble Savage—with another one, with a reappropriation of the cultural imagery of Indians.

This tactic of artists using art to make art recurs in the Custom House exhibit, most notably in Lloyd Kiva New's arrangement of Northwest Coast hats floating ethereally in the case. The piece is visually striking, but the captioning is jarring and confusing. The hats—there is nothing else in the case—do not matter, New proclaims. What matters is what the hats meant to people, and what they represent about their accomplishments. But New, a Cherokee and former director of the Institute of American Indian Arts, does not explain what the hats did mean to the people who made and wore them, and so the viewer is left with an image of hats ripped from heads and contexts hovering in a world of arbitrary meanings. If the hat itself is not important as a hat, if their meanings can be so easily detached from the hats, why are the hats preserved and kept in museums?



POLYCHROME JAR (KIUA), NEW MEXICO, 1800-80
Courtesy Eugene and Clare Thaw Collection, NYSHA

This erasure of original meanings, this willed ignorance about Indian objects, brings me to the second theme running through the exhibit as a whole. This is the theme of loss and renascence. Joseph Medicine Crow is a man of nearly legendary knowledge about the Crows. In his catalog essay, he speaks with clarity and certainty, but in the exhibit labels he is far more reticent. Speaking of a shield cover, Medicine Crow says: "You know I'm guessing. It means something to the maker.... It's a spiritual experience, a philosophical thing and these are symbols representing something the maker himself knew." Such a label is confusing and illustrates the difficulty involved in exhibiting these objects. They do not speak for themselves, and the most knowledgeable living members of the communities from which they come often do not know what they mean. And the loss of meaning also becomes a metaphor for the loss of culture, a way to distinguish "real" Indians from lesser Indians. Often, in a familiar rhetorical tactic in Indian country, the loss in question is the loss of some other group's culture and identity. Thus, Medicine Crow offhandedly suggests that tribes that "have lost their clan system don't have much of a cultural base," while the retention of their clan system "makes the Crows Indians so to speak."

The loss of knowledge can serve as a plea for renascence. Earl Nyholm, an Ojibwe canoe maker and curator, represents modern Ojibwe culture as broken and scattered. He doesn't like the word "tradition," calling it one of the "most abused words in Indian-English" today. He prefers the word "proper," in the sense of something customary and done in such a way as to make the activity or object suitable or correct. Unlike "tradition," which connects the rightness of things with their correspondence to past practices, "proper" has the advantage of recognizing changing circumstances. Nyholm wants to restore propriety to the Ojibwe, and for him Ojibwe bandolier bags, which he sees as the apex of Woodland beadwork, serve as examples of proper cultural production. The NMAI has a stunning collection of these large, colorful, intricately beaded bags, which reached their artistic peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They appear to have arisen from a combination of native skin bags and European shoulder bags and haversacks.

In such a display of past achievements, there is always, at least implicitly, a grand reading of history: once we rose to do great things, but then we did great things no longer. Sometimes this is made explicit, as curators mobilize historical figures into a usable past, to represent decline and renascence so as to inspire future renewals. When historical readings are made explicit, however, they may be questioned. And sometimes they are highly suspect, as when, in the Custom House, Emil Many Horses says that

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the Lakotas in the 1860s had become dependent on federal reparations and had to "relearn the old ways—how to hunt buffalo and engage in military strategies. . . . "

Even as Many Horses uses the shirts to symbolize how the Lakotas once lost and then found the "old ways," he subverts this tale of tradition restored with what is my favorite item in the Custom House: a parasol. It is made of tanned deerskin exquisitely decorated with floral bead and quill work. This parasol shows the impressive resilience of Lakota culture under the worst of circumstances. It fully captures the skill, the curiosity and the resourcefulness of the Lakotas at the turn of the century. The problem is that there is nothing at all "traditional" about a Sioux parasol. A Sioux parasol! Such an object is not about the "old ways," it is about the encounter of the "old ways" with another culture. The parasol is really a monument to cultural porousness.

The professional curators in the exhibit are the most attuned to this history of mixture, innovation and resilience. Probably the most interesting and sophisticated of the displays in the Custom House, and the best of the catalog essays, comes from Tom Hill, a professional curator, a Seneca trained in art history. Hill's work alone is worth the price of admission. He believes in museums, but he wants to make them accessible to Indian peoples who are put off or intimidated by them. He admires the people whose work he exhibits, but he is impatient with the reverence that people display toward this "traditional" past. Hill wishes to capture the messiness of change instead of creating a reverential picture of a lost, but once perfect, Indian past.

Hill's displays range widely; he looks, for example, at how Haida artisans moved from a tourist to a high-art market, and how, as Christian Mohawks joined the Masons, their silver work began to incorporate Masonic emblems in their design. I don't know if Hill succeeded in making his own exhibit more accessible to Indian peoples, but he has made a complicated and sophisticated version of Indian material culture accessible to the general public. He has a wonderful eye for materials that blur cultural boundaries: Huron pincushions whose busy Victorian beadwork is combined with moosehair embroidery; a wonderful woven statue of a turkey, in which the skills of basketry are turned into something resembling sculpture; an Ottawa woman's stylishly woven sweetgrass hat copied from commercial designs.

The value of Hill's work becomes apparent if you move upstate from the Custom House to the New York State Historical Association, with its magnificent Thaw Collection. It is a more recent collection, whose beginnings are owed to the fascination of a prominent art dealer and his collector-wife with Indian materials. Their interest in Indian art sprang from their interest in the mixing of Indian motifs and European cultural influences. More specifically, the Thaws seem to have been fascinated by the appearance of the Christian cross in many native art works.

Working at a time when art had largely replaced ethnology as the rationale for collecting, the Thaws insisted on aesthetic quality as the criterion for their collection. Of course, the divorce from ethnology can never be complete. And I have in mind not only the historical and cultural contexts of the Indians. There are also the contexts of the collectors to consider. In the late twentieth century, the Thaws found their own notions of artistic form fulfilled in a native art whose beauty, while acknowledged earlier, had usually been prefaced with disclaimers about crudeness and weirdness.

The Thaws' devotion to "aesthetic quality" has resulted in a ravishing collection, but it does not settle the interesting tension between two different sets of aesthetic standards: those of the collectors and those of the original artists. The objects in the Thaw Collection range over 1,000 years and come from many different cultures. What unites them is not so much that they are "Indian" as that they are North American objects that conform to late twentieth-century aesthetic standards. The makers of these objects sought, I am sure, to make them beautiful, but they also sought to make them ritually powerful or useful in everyday life. To define them solely in terms of aesthetics is thus to some degree to transform them.

Knowing this, we can mentally compensate; it is hard, after all, to understand the native aesthetics to which the artists might have conformed. And the disparity between the collectors' aesthetics and the artists' aesthetics becomes less difficult for objects produced in the twentieth century, when Indian artists and artisans sold to non-Indian customers, integrated non-Indian techniques and were trained in the same schools and practices as non-Indians. Non-Indian artists, in turn, found inspiration in native productions. There was, to some degree, a common aesthetic.

In "The Shape of Creation: The Native American Vision of Three Worlds," in the Clark Gallery of the new wing devoted to the Thaw Collection, art and ethnology mix, but the curators do their best to bury the historical, the contextual, the cultural mixture beneath timeless Indian themes and traditions. Not surprisingly, the themes and the traditions are so generic, so human, that there seems to be little specifically Indian about them. The Sky World, the Surface World and the Underworld are essentially the worlds that we know as Heaven, Earth and Hell. A variety of Indian cultures worked themes of these worlds in ways very different from Christian Europe, but you would hardly know it from the exhibit. Stressing a common Indianness that extends across millennia and a hemisphere means diluting Indian cultures so much that they cease to seem very different from a similarly diluted European tradition. It is occasionally hard to see why the curators don't just keep going and include European art or, for that matter, art from all over the world. Indeed, this would make a certain sense, given that it was the presence of the Christian cross in Indian artwork that inspired the Thaws to begin their collection in the first place.

The controlling idea of the exhibit in the Clark Gallery is that Native American artists use symbols to make the "invisible visible." The symbolism varies from tribe to tribe, but the exhibit seeks out similarities. These are so general that all kinds of objects can be connected. The curators put extraordinarily beautiful pieces from very different times and places together because of a common symbol or a design similarity. Thus, in a case illustrating the "four-leggeds" (the Lakota Black Elk's often repeated phrase) there is a Penobscot birchbark box (c. 1890), a Zia pot (1930-40), a Mimbres bowl (c. 1000-1150) and a Zuni jar (1900). All these items contain a four-legged animal in their decoration. To further emphasize this Indianness, citations from Indian peoples who lived in one time or place are used as a commentary on objects made by very different peoples in very different times. In a case on the Surface World, for example, the portrait masks are all from the Northwest Coast, but the quotation in the case is from an Eskimo. The curators have banished history from art, even though in object after object the history of cultural contact stares the viewer in the face.

In the second gallery—the Eugene and Clare Thaw Gallery—history does not altogether vanish. The curators describe and display the evolution of Navajo "Chief Blankets," and a label

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describes how a Nul'amal mask adapted imagery from lion heads carved on American and European sailing ships. And, indeed, without history what are we to make of the wonderful violin case made for a German immigrant named George Schmidt as a Christmas present by his Sioux wife on the Rosebud Reservation in 1899? Its beadwork includes a violin, a flag and Sioux motifs of the four directions.

These emphases are curatorial decisions. You need only to flip through the beautiful *Masterpieces of American Indian Art from the Eugene and Clare Thaw Collection* to recognize the wealth of knowledge that the curators bring to the collection, the distinctions that they make between different traditions and production methods, the sensitivity with which they record these changes over time. But all this is largely absent from the displays themselves. And what makes this erasure of history even more jarring is that these exhibits are part of a historical museum. Last fall, when I visited Cooperstown, there was a quilt exhibit upstairs that also included as a side exhibit beaded purses made for the tourist trade by Seneca, Micmac and Mohegan women. Here, instead of timeless traditions or static cultures, were clear descriptions of how Indian craftswomen melded their skills and tastes to the "object forms and decorative styles of their European customers." And to wander, as I did, from the Fenimore House to the Farmers' Museum across the road is to realize that, despite the extraordinary beauty of the Thaw Collection, its display in Cooperstown inadvertently reproduces the oldest and most lasting tradition in the representation of Indians, which is that they are a people without history.

The historical approach to Indian objects and materials is available at what is, at first glance, the most old-fashioned of these museums: the Peabody at Harvard. It is crowded and confined. It has pieces of incredible artistry, including some of the oldest examples of Northwest Coast art in the United States, such as a Chilkat blanket collected in 1800 and probably manufactured shortly before its collection. But it is also an ethnological exhibit with everyday utilitarian items that are neither strikingly beautiful nor products of exceptional craft.

What the Peabody has in abundance is a sense of history and context. It rejects the premise of a static culture. "Depicting the Iroquois in longhouses, the Navajo in hogan, and the Tlingit in massive plank houses does provide images of the variety of adaptations," one label reads, "but tells us little of the complex story of how Native Americans came to be who they are today." Ian Brown, who redesigned the Hall of the North American Indians, sought to emphasize the collision of the creative and the historical: how "these people responded to major disruptions in their lives brought about by European contact." Exhibits emphasize how tourism and mass marketing affect pottery, basketry and weaving. Curators deconstruct dioramas and photographs to show how European artifacts lay hidden in portrayals of timeless tradition. Labels explain how artists, such as the Hopi Tewa potter Nampegeo, reinterpreted designs from classic Sikyatki shards found near First Mesa to develop her own distinctive style. And, in a brilliant curatorial move, the Peabody has decided to keep an example of its older exhibits on Indians intact. For museums, too, have a history. They do not present an unchanging past discovered by scholars. They present a past as it was discovered by scholars at a particular historical moment.

Museums have found that they cannot easily escape their own past. This complication is much in evidence in all the collections that I have discussed. These collections have become a treasure to Indian communities, which often hold no similar material record of their past, and to non-Indians. But they have also become something of an embarrassment. Not only did the museums literally have skeletons in their closet—the remains of Indians, some ancient, some from the late nineteenth century—but they also have numerous objects whose acquisition was, shall we say, problematic.

The problem is not just a moral one. Thanks to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, it is also a legal one. The act mandated that any federal agency or museum receiving federal funds must inventory their collections. They were to return human remains and "associated funerary objects," "unassociated funerary objects," "sacred objects," and objects belonging to the "cultural patrimony" of a people when lineal descent to current tribes could be established. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act exempted the Smithsonian, but the NMAI has adopted its own set of policies, and they are even more restrictive. They seek to return all objects illegally acquired as well as "duplicate or abundant" objects.

The problems that these somewhat unrealistic policies seek to address are quite real. The NMAI, for example, arises largely out of the Heye Collection, a wonderful private collection long housed in New York City. Like other major collections on the East Coast, it contains stunning items from the Northwest Coast. Many such items passed out of Indian hands when they were confiscated by Canadian officials when Canada banned, and then moved to repress, potlatch ceremonies. These objects passed by various means into the hands of collectors and museums. Whatever else they represent, they are goods confiscated by a foreign state engaged in cultural and religious repression and then conveyed to private collectors.

Other items, such as Zuni war gods that guarded the boundaries of Zuni country, were simply stolen. The Harriman Alaska Expedition of 1899 looted an empty Tlingit village at Cape Fox, uprooting totem poles, pillaging other carved items and despoiling graves. Through a concerted effort by the Zuni, the war gods have largely been returned, but many pilfered items, including the Harriman house and totem poles, have become the property of museums, including the Peabody.

Far more complicated and numerous are items that passed into white hands by tangled means that are legitimate in the eyes of white purchasers but problematic in the eyes of many Indians. Many sacred bundles from the Great Plains were sold by Indian owners to museums and collectors not because their owners lost their belief in them, but because they retained belief in their powers and doubted their ability to conduct the ceremonies that were necessary to placate the powers that the bundles possessed. People from these communities who still believe in the power of the bundles often regret their sale and sometimes regard their display in museums as a sacrilege. The Field Museum in Chicago recently removed a Pawnee bundle from public view, leaving an empty space in the case and an explanation of their action.

It is understandably hard for many Indians, and for sympathetic whites, to disassociate the often wonderful items of the Heye, the Peabody and other collections from a history of conquest and injustice that delivered some of these items to these museums. The Thaws, in assembling their collection, were sensitive to such concerns; they took pains to avoid undocumented items and items associated with human remains. To be sure, looting, conquest and grave-robbing as sources of museum art are not unique to museums of Indian art and artifacts. Still, given the relative modernity of the conquest, and the presence of the conquered, and the bad conscience of the conquerors, and the

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complexity of American cultural politics, it is perhaps more pressing an issue in Indian museums than elsewhere.

But the cultural politics of Indian materials are still more complicated. Far from being looted by whites, many Indian craft items were produced specifically for the white tourist and collector's market. The Santa Fe Railroad and the Fred Harvey Company were instrumental in the revival of Pueblo pottery and the marketing of Navajo weaving. An American arts and crafts movement heavily influenced by William Morris helped to develop a taste and market for Indian crafts and, as Sarah H. Hill has shown in her careful work on Cherokee basketry, influenced the production and design of the arts that they encouraged. The New Deal's Indian Arts and Crafts Board revived and encouraged tribal crafts.

Far from being "traditional," then, much Indian artistic production is a part of the mixing of cultures and peoples. The current tendency to put the "sacred," the "traditional," the "natural" and the "artistic" at the heart of all Indian life obscures the commercial, the bureaucratic, the secular, the inventive. It also assumes, as one curator for the NMAI put it, that the "aesthetic sense is so well honored in traditional societies." But it is the sheerest romanticism to believe that all native groups had well-developed pottery, weaving or pictorial traditions, that all these societies were essentially spiritual and artistic.

And this romanticism is not confined to whites. There is an Indian trend, particularly among urban Indians, to define more and more of Indian life as sacred. Indian peoples and their religious leaders differ over what is sacred, and museums often feel trapped in the controversies that follow. Museums yield to vocal demands from Indian visitors to remove objects from displays even when curators have obtained the approval of the people whose cultural works they are displaying, and when their own Indian boards of advisers want the objects displayed.

The fashion for retroactive sacredness has had a notable impact on museums. In 1992, the Minneapolis Art Institute prepared an exhibit, "Visions of the People," that was to include calumets, among them some beautiful and intricately carved catalinite pipes. These are items of extraordinary craft, and they are central to the calumet (peace pipe) ceremony and to many other ceremonies. The calumets in the exhibit were largely from the Great Plains tribes, and Louise Lincoln, the curator, consulted with religious leaders from the Plains who were eager to have the pipes exhibited. Her Indian advisory board approved the exhibit. But members of the Indian community in the Twin Cities, many of them not from the Great Plains and not familiar with the rituals involving the pipes, declared that all such pipes were sacred, that their display was a sacrilege.

This redefinition of all pipes as sacred took curators, Plains religious leaders and scholars by surprise. The calumet ceremony itself began among the Pawnees, and pipes and numerous other items in this and other ceremonies moved back and forth between ceremonial and secular use. James Murie, a turn-of-the-century Pawnee scholar, gave no indication in his *Ceremonies of the Pawnees* (written between 1910 and 1920 but not published until 1981) that all pipes, by virtue of their use in a ceremony, were sacred. But Louise Lincoln was sympathetic to the protesters' concerns. A compromise was reached. The institute left the case that was to contain the pipes in the exhibit, and the labels, and they replaced the pipes with stones selected by local Indians. When the exhibit opened, an old man from one of the Great Plains tribes toured the galleries. He was a native speaker, and so he was accompanied by a curator and a translator. When he reached the pipe case, he saw the stones and asked what they were. The curator explained the controversy. The old man muttered something. The translator didn't translate. "What did he say?" the curator asked. "Damnedest thing he ever saw," said the translator.

If the Indians' magical-polemical words are "sacred" and "traditional," whites often counter with magical-polemical words of their own. *The Wall Street Journal* was hot on the usual trail when it visited the initial NMAI exhibit at the Custom House, and found "a whiff of political correctitude." And recently the right-wing academic journal *Academic Questions* has published what amounts to sections of a legal brief filed by Judith Brunin. Formerly on the staff of the NMAI, Brunin is suing her ex-employer. Whatever the merits of her complaint against her former employer (and infighting at the museum has hardly been confined to whites versus Indians), legal briefs in personnel disputes don't usually find their way into academic journals. In this case, however, the brief sounds the alarm against an Indian "Cultural Agenda." It laments the demise of traditional standards under which objective historians and curators created exhibits that had nothing to do with the cultural currents of the time,

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and museums assembled their collections of "authentic artifacts" "according to the tenets of scholarship."

The problem with such an argument, which pits defenses of the "sacred" against attacks on the "politically correct," is that important and interesting conflicts over the display of Indian art and artifacts get reduced to the same old cultural soap opera. In the right-wing version, truth and the American way fall victim to bullying minorities and craven academics. In the increasingly common Indian version, museums perpetuate yet another atrocity against Indian victims. What both sides fail to grasp is the nature of the museological enterprise. Museums have a dual role. They display a past that demands respect on its own terms, but they display it in a present that is characterized by obsessions of its own.

We live in a time when mixture is all around us, when cultural boundaries are permeable. Some among us find this rattling, and long for the purity and the simplicity that we locate in the past. There are Christian fundamentalists who read the Bible literally and Indian fundamentalists who assert the literal truth of their creation stories. There are Indians enraptured with the sacred and the traditional, with a pure world uncorrupted by cultural contact, and there are whites with their own ideas of sacred Western traditions now being defiled in museums and universities. Of course, the two groups are hardly equivalent. The whites have vastly more power than the Indians. And yet, in asserting the special status of their own traditions in a motley and messy world, they share a common late twentieth-century American impulse. What the display of Indian materials in museums can really teach us, explicitly and implicitly, intentionally and unintentionally, is the hybridity and the contingency of all life in America. We see history where many would like to see only timeless beauty; and we see beauty where some would like us to see only injustice. •

The Prince of Protest

By Paul Berman

Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen by Jervis Anderson

(HarperCollins, 418 pp., $30)

Bayard Rustin refused the draft in World War II—refused it because he belonged not only to the militantly meek Religious Society of Friends, but also to a bristly circle of "hot pacifists," whose zeal against wars of every kind was confrontational and revolutionary. The Quaker affiliation meant that, face to face with the draft board, Rustin could have invoked a legal right to an officially condoned status as conscientious objector and opted for alternative service, either in a noncombat role or, if any military duty at all trespassed on his Christian sensibility, in a Civilian Public Service camp. But this, too, he refused. To the hottest of hot pacifists, even the most civilian of civilian services propped up the criminality of the wartime state, and therefore was morally odious. And off he went, a pacifist's pacifist, submissively unyielding, to the federal penitentiaries in Ashland, Kentucky, and Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

Incarceration was hard, doubly so since Rustin was black, triply so since he insisted on protesting the doubly so. The sentence was long—three years, of which he served twenty-eight painful months. Yet hardship dampened his ardors not at all. Released from jail, he returned to his old job at the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation in New York, where the leaders dispatched him at once on a tour of the country to spread the radical word. And off he went again, into the American hinterland, bearing his impossible doctrine.

Has there ever been a movement with more dismal-seeming prospects than radical pacifism in the years around World War II? Draft resistance was hugely unpopular during the war, and when the fighting came to an end and people could reflect on every terrible wartime thing that had occurred, the draft resisters looked worse instead of better—serenely smug in their morally wrongheaded stance, martyred in their own eyes yet suspiciously hale and hearty from the point of view of the bedraggled veterans home from Europe or the Pacific. Rustin dutifully trudged from place to place, delivering his message about radical nonviolence, and he was greeted with something other than acclaim. His biographer, Jervis Anderson, who recounts these events, might as well be named Miguel de Cervantes.

Radical pacifism is a very peculiar movement, though, and its moments of failure and defeat can come quickly to an end, and the Quaker-style call to the inner conscience can suddenly resonate, like a perfectly executed high C, in unpredicted ways. One of the first stops on Rustin's post-penitentiary tour was St. Paul, Minnesota. He arrived in January, 1947, and went to his hotel, where the staff, discovering that he was black, refused to honor his room reservation. Naturally, the militant resister who had refused the draft refused the refusal. He set down his luggage in the lobby, telephoned his contacts, white and black, received these people as they came to visit him in the hotel lobby, declined to budge and generally staged a one-man, highly articulate, unflappable insurrection.

The principles of that insurrection, as reported by a St. Paul newspaper that Anderson cites, consisted of "the nonviolent direct action approach," which meant "sitting it out," "holding your ground" and "appealing to the moral heart of the individual." Of course, once Rustin had succeeded in getting his confrontation defined in terms like those, he had already reduced the hotel, morally speaking, to a shambles. By early morning the management offered him the best of rooms—which he turned down, this time doubtless with a radiant display of triumphant Christian forgiveness, in favor of spending the night with friends. And instantly we see, reading Anderson's account of all this, how a detested and marginal group like the radical pacifists of World War II, by continuing to exercise their unchanging monomaniacal zeal for uncooperation, might well acquire the power to move mountains—if only the pacifists could choose the right set of enemies.

The people around the Fellowship of Reconciliation expected all along to achieve big things. The fellowship's leader was the Reverend A.J. Muste, whose entire lengthy career testified to the possibility that radical agitators could emerge as if from nowhere and, like Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times,* end up leading a mass insurrection. In 1919, when he was 34, Muste found himself commanding a textile workers' mass strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. His efforts led him into the field of labor education, and in the 1930s he converted his education project into a

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tiny, independent Marxist faction (with a Christian and democratic inflection, much admired by Edmund Wilson and Sidney Hook) called the American Workers Party. And the faction ended up leading one of the classic labor uprisings, a mass strike in Toledo, Ohio, in 1934, that built the CIO.

Muste lost faith in Marxism after a while. The disillusionment came over him suddenly, on his way home from visiting Trotsky in Norway, during a stopover at St. Sulpice Church in Paris, with its gruesome memorials to the murdered churchmen of the French Revolution. He retreated to the Christian pacifism of his younger years. But the general principle of a mass insurrection led by outsiders, of marginal radicals becoming militant popular leaders, of the impossible proving to be more than possible—that principle never left him. His new preferred model, in place of Lenin and Trotsky and the Bolshevik Revolution, was Gandhi and the movement for Indian independence. In Gandhi's pacifist triumphs over British imperialism, as expounded by Krishnalal Shridharani in *War Without Violence,* was unmistakable proof that nonviolent resistance, rigorously applied, could perfectly well work miracles.

Muste's Fellowship of Reconciliation maternally presided over a frail little family of pacifist mini-organizations, the Secular War Resisters League, the civil rights Congress of Racial Equality and a number of single-issue committees, each tinier than the last, staffed by an interchangeable assortment of unwavering souls, the oldsters dating from the anti-draft struggles of World War I, the youngsters from World War II. Carefully, Muste surveyed his troops in search of the supremely talented leader who, with proper grooming, could become America's Gandhi. And in Rustin he thought he had found that person: a young man of intelligence, vivacity, pluck, oratorical ability, charm and an intensity of principles that sent him to jail again and again, hopelessly recidivist, in 1947 for thirty days in North Carolina, in 1949 for twenty-two days on a chain gang and onward into the 1950s.

Rustin was perfect, except for the single disabling quirk of his notoriously promiscuous homosexuality. In his earlier years, he was by all accounts a handsome and seductive figure, and his sexual enthusiasms repeatedly got him into trouble. He was bounced out of a couple of colleges (or so the murky record suggests, though Anderson has not been able to learn for sure) and sternly admonished by Muste not to bury the pacifist movement under a haze of scandals. But it was no use. On a speaking tour of California for the Fellowship of Reconciliation (and for the cause of Nigerian independence), Rustin was arrested in Pasadena for having sex in a car with not one but two members of his audience, and was sent to jail yet again, this time for sixty days.

BAYARD RUSTIN BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Pasadena arrest was the great calamity of Rustin's career. Muste turned away from him in a real fury, which seems to have been a worse blow for Rustin than the jail sentence or the public disgrace. He sank into depression. Nor was that the only disaster during those early years. Rustin's second, slightly more distant mentor was A. Philip Randolph, the old-time leader of Harlem Socialism, who had organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and had used his little union to push the cause of racial integration in the labor movement as a whole, an achievement of enormous importance. Rustin went to work for Randolph twice during the 1940s—early in the decade, when Randolph organized a campaign to pressure President Roosevelt into ordering the desegregation of war industries, and again in 1948, when Randolph organized to pressure President Truman into ordering the desegregation of the armed forces.

Randolph was a formidable strategist, and both of his campaigns succeeded, with immeasurable consequences, in forcing the president's hand. And both times Rustin, infected with a spirit of militant treachery, joined a group of backroom ultra-radical conspirators who failed to see the victory and fulminated against Randolph for selling out. Politically, that was fairly idiotic on Rustin's part, and in his personal relations with Randolph, it was unforgivable, or nearly so. It left Rustin hopelessly isolated, a man of talent (everybody agreed) whose own behavior had undermined his standing with both Muste and Randolph, therefore with the separate worlds of Protestant leftism and Socialist unionism.

But Rustin was wonderfully resilient. He was a man at ease with his blackness and his homosexuality, confident of his intelligence and his talent, who fortified himself still further by constructing, as a kind of concrete outer barrier, a series of stylish idiosyncrasies. As early as high school, he adopted an upper-class British accent. He stood and walked in a manner that made people take him to be some kind of visiting African monarch. Over the years, he dressed ever more magnificently until, in his old age, his sartorial extravagances blossomed into a display of exotic walking canes, including one with a hidden sword, Bulgarian-style (which got him arrested yet again). He was musical, too, and cultivated his talents as a singer, an aficionado of Baroque compositions, a lutanist (he taught him-

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The Swarm

(Todi, 1996)

I wanted you to listen to the bells.
I held the phone out the one small window
to where I thought
the ringing was—

Vespers scavenging the evening air,
phone a fist against the huge dissolving
of the out-

side—a vow being exchanged
where I stared at the tiny holes in the receiver's transatlantic opening
to see where evening light and then churchbells

sent their regrets—slithering in—
in there a white flame charged with duplication—
I had you try to listen—bending down into the mouthpiece to whisper,
hard,

can you hear them (two petals fall and then the is wholly
changed) (yes) (and then another yes like a vertebrate enchaining)
yes yes yes yes

We were somebody. A boat stills on a harbor and for a while
no one appears,
not on deck, not on shore,
only a few birds glancing round.

then—before a single face appears—something
announces itself
like a piece of the whole blueness broken off and thrown down,
a roughness inserted,

yes,
the infinite variety of *having once been,*
of being, of *coming to life,* right there in the thin air—a debris re-

assembling—a blue transparent bit of paper flapping in also-blue air—

boundaries being squeezed out of the blue, out of the *inside* of the blue,
human eyes
held shut—

and then the whisking-open of the lash—the *be thou, be thou,*

—a boat stills in a harbor and for a while no one
appears—a sunny day, a crisp Aegean blue,
easy things—a keel, a sail, a bit of coastline—

why should you fear?
me holding my arm out into the crisp December early dusk—
beige cord and then the plastic parenthetical opening wherein I have you

—you without eyes or arms or body now—listen to

the long ocean between us and then

—the plastic cooling now in the night air—this tiny geometric swarm of
openings sending to you

no parts of me you've touched, no places where you've

gone—

Two petals fall—hear it?—moon, are you not coming soon?—two fall

JORIE GRAHAM

self the lute in prison) and a collector and repairer of harpsichords. He enjoyed himself. He was ebullient.

And so, with his many carefully assembled props and his *savoir vivre,* Rustin managed to pull himself together. He resumed his work for Muste's little family of agitational committees, notably the War Resisters League (of which he became executive secretary for twelve years, following his twelve years at the Fellowship of Reconciliation); resumed his old distrustful rivalry with another of Muste's protégés, James Farmer of CORE; repaired his relation with Randolph; took his place among the editors of Muste's magazine *Liberation*; and went about his thankless martyr's labor: a one-man civil disobedience movement, civilly disobeying.

And then, suddenly, in late 1955, as if from nowhere, America's Gandhi did appear, leading a black boycott of the segregated public buses of Birmingham, Alabama. Anderson emphasizes that America's Gandhi, surveying the world from his Montgomery Baptist pulpit, did not know, at first, that he was a Gandhi. Rustin was brought into the bus boycott through connections from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and when he visited the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. at his home, he was astonished to see a gun resting in full view on an armchair. As Rustin pointed out later, "Not one of the Negro leaders in Montgomery was a pacifist when the struggle began."

Rustin's duties toward the boycott, then, became multiple. He supplied organizational expertise: the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was in large part his brainchild. He set up the alliance between King and Randolph, and therefore between King and some of the powerful progressive unions (eventually). He offered tactical advice. And more crucially still, he supplied the philosophical rationale for the mass nonviolent resistance that proved to be, in Birmingham and elsewhere around the South during the later '50s and into the '60s, a mystifying weapon of almost irresistible force.

Not everyone agrees that Rustin performed those several duties with perfect aplomb. Anderson quotes Harris Wofford, who was active in the boycott, saying that Rustin behaved with the arrogant air of a man issuing orders from Gandhian central command. Rustin was never well-liked or trusted by the Southern ministers. The scandalousness of his sexual reputation, combined with his history as a C.O. (not to mention an additional brief history at City College in the Young Communist League, which he

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repudiated, but which his enemies never forgave), left him vulnerable to the whispered or shouted hostility of any well-placed person who wished to see him gone from the scene. During the Montgomery boycott, he had to sneak away after awhile and communicate with King secretly from afar, where his critics couldn't assail him.

He might have been driven out of the civil rights movement entirely, but for Randolph's stalwart support. And yet, in his backstage fashion, admired by some, detested by others, Rustin became, in Anderson's judgment, the civil rights movement's "shrewdest theoretician; its most sophisticated political analyst; its most talented organizer." Muste's gamble that radical pacifists would eventually end up at the head of a mass insurrection in spite of every terrible blow they had suffered, or because of every terrible blow (theirs was the ambiguity of all martyrological movements), turned out to have been won.

It was Rustin who organized the series of marches on Washington that helped carry the movement forward in the immediate next years—the Prayer Pilgrimage to Washington in 1957 (which brought 30,000 people to the capital, an enormous crowd by the standards of pre-1960s mass demonstrations), plus the two Youth Marches for Integrated Schools in 1958 and 1959. His enemies in the movement did drive him away after that, and he busied himself with the causes of nuclear disarmament and African independence. But in 1963, when he and Randolph came up with the idea of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Rustin was the natural choice for director, even if he was obliged to mollify his enemies by agreeing to conceal his responsibility for the march under the titular leadership of an unassailable Randolph.

Anderson emphasizes the immense difficulty of organizing the March for Jobs and Freedom—the unprecedented challenge of bringing so many people to Washington (which is hard to remember in our post-'63 era, when, in endless unconscious homage to Rustin, entire percentages of the population arrive regularly to express their grievances), the delicate task of deciding which groups to welcome into the march coalition and which to shoo away, the difficulties of keeping the fractious from fracturing, the diplomatic challenge of maintaining proper relations with the Washington police department, the logistical challenge of sanitation, the psychological challenge in assembling the movement's several hot-heads and cool-heads on the same speaker's platform.

Perhaps a quarter of a million people arrived for the march, which was astonishing. King, from his strategically suspenseful position at the tail end of the speaker's list, worked his oratorical wonders (having had sufficient practice delivering national sermons during Rustin's previous Washington marches). And the result was, of course, something truly rare, a turning point in the national history. This was the march that, as Rustin justly said, "made Americans feel for the first time that we were capable of being truly a nation, that we were capable of moving beyond division and bigotry."

Among the thousand consequences of that march, however, was one that is not normally given much consideration. The enormous crowd came and went; the Kennedy and Johnson administrations tipped in favor of civil rights; the historic congressional bills were passed in 1964 and 1965; King won his Nobel Prize (with Rustin arranging the European tour that ensued). And the radical pacifists had to ask themselves: What was the purpose of continuing to speak, as they always had, in a wan, martyr's voice? What would it mean to retain the style and the habits of a marginal movement when they had just demonstrated an ability to dominate American politics? The pacifists pictured themselves as speaking truth to power, which had always seemed a supremely lofty thing to do. But now the civil rights movement was itself a power. Wasn't it time to think of newer, more ambitious projects? Something less ethereal? Instead of reshaping the soul, reshaping the society?

A good many of the people in Rustin's circles within the nonviolent resistance movement could not begin to think along these new lines. Those people were opposers, not proposers. They never did want to hold in their hands any kind of conventional power. They knew that, after the civil rights victories, the old protest style could not continue forever, but their hope was to find a newer style that would allow them to remain as adamant and revolutionary as in the past; to change and not be changed. And, sure enough, because of the new realities of the mid-1960s—the Vietnam War, the outbreak of cultural anxieties among portions of the suddenly liberated black population—the newer protest styles were easy enough to find.

David Dellinger came up with one of them. As you can learn from his autobiography, *From Yale to Jail*, Dellinger lived (and lives) a parallel existence to Rustin's. Dellinger, too, was one of Muste's boys. He served a long sentence for draft

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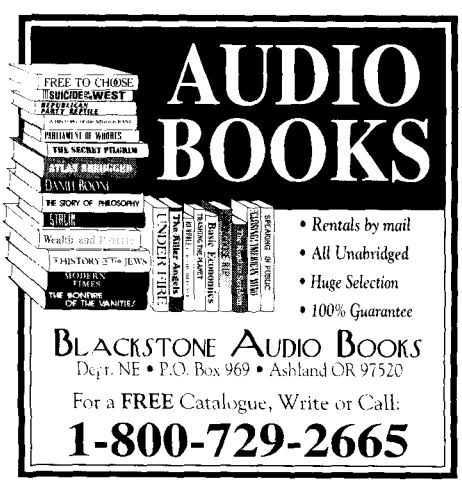
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resistance in World War II, and afterwards he, too, devoted himself to anti-nuclear agitations and civil rights work. He, too, was lifted by life and his own political labors into a national role. He ended up the principal organizer of several of the important national anti-war demonstrations during the later 1960s and early '70s. But where Rustin stuck to the old socialist hostility to communism, Dellinger and his fellow-thinkers at *Liberation* and in other corners of the non-communist left took the novel step of opening the anti-war coalition to communist participation. And more: Dellinger began to look on Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese Communists with the same fond feeling of Christian admiration that, in the old days, everyone around the Fellowship of Reconciliation had felt for Gandhi.

Those were big changes in the history of the nonviolent resistance movement. And there were bigger ones. Stokely Carmichael was a protégé of Rustin's in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. In the mid-'60s, he, too, looked for ways to keep up the old unyielding radicalism. He veered into black nationalism and, at the same time, admired the communist liberation movements of the Third World with more fervor even than Dellinger, and the radicalism in those new ideas grew ever more intense until, in Carmichael's case, the old nonviolent tradition at last floated away on a wisp of smoke.

Rustin knew exactly what was going to come of those new inspirations. On the topic of admitting communist and pro-communist organizations into the peace movement, he wrote in 1967 that no "effective" or "enduring" movement "can be built, or win influence with the American people, which becomes publicly identified with groups that want not peace but a Viet Cong victory." He was just as tough on Carmichael and the nationalist evolution of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He said, in 1966, that "Black Power, as it is defined rather vaguely by SNCC, is an attempt to provide psychological solutions to problems that are profoundly economic." Three years later he added, in regard to the pressure for Black Studies, "We are living in a time when everybody is proposing what will make them feel good, instead of what will solve the problem.... It is very cheap to turn to young Negroes, who are in internal agony ... and give them the hope of Black Studies that they can easily pass."

Those were shrewd criticisms, as anyone can see thirty years later, and he coupled them with a positive program of his own. He wanted to make the leap, in his phrase, "from protest to politics." You could say that, in the aftermath of the march of 1963, he shifted philosophically from Muste to Randolph, from Christian pacifism to social democracy. He adopted the political analysis of Randolph's comrade in the Socialist Party, Max Shachtman, the old Trotskyist (some of whose young followers served as Rustin's staff), and he came out in favor of a vast campaign to convert the Democratic Party into a European-style social democratic force. The heart of his new idea was a Freedom Budget for All Americans, which was meant to be a more radical version of President Johnson's War on Poverty, except with the hope of appealing to everyone, New Deal-style, not just to the downtrodden and the do-gooders.

Rustin's notion was to build on what had already been accomplished in the civil rights movement—to become still more powerful, not to return to the street protests of the 1950s and to the outsider mentality of the old pacifist left. The notion was extremely radical, if you consider what might have happened had Rustin been able to recreate or to keep alive the coalition that had coalesced around civil rights and the march of 1963. But the full ambitiousness of his new concept somehow disappeared beneath the flurry of arguments from his old comrades. The debate about the peace movement with his friends at *Liberation* had to do with communism—whether to maintain the stern democratic principles of the past (meaning, no cooperation with totalitarians) or to let the principles slide. But Rustin allowed the argument to get defined by the rival anti-war slogans of "Out Now" (Dellinger's line) and "Negotiations Now" (Rustin's), which made Rustin look like he wanted to prolong the war instead of ending it. The anti-war vitriol that was poured rhetorically over poor Rustin's unoffending head in the course of that debate was truly gruesome—in the pages of *Liberation*, no less, by his fellow pacifist Staughton Lynd.

It was the same with Carmichael and the black nationalists. The rival slogans were "Black Power" (meaning black nationalism and identification with Third World liberation movements) versus "Freedom Now" (meaning integration and social democratic reform), and though Rustin's slogan this time avoided the wimpy sound of a call for halfway measures, again he got painted as a traitor to the cause. An Uncle Tom—he who had worked his many miracles for the cause of King and civil rights! He never seemed to realize that his own heroic campaigns of the past had cast a romantic and appealing light over the posture of absolute opposition and marginal radicalism, and no amount of arguing for pragmatic New Deal-type federal budgets and social democratic egalitarianism was going to disperse the glow, and his defeats on the left followed one on the other, until his left-wing reputation had disappeared into darkness.

The nadir for him was the schoolteachers' strike in New York City in 1968. In that strike, a social democratic trade union was pitted against a wave of neighborhood black nationalists demanding community control over the schools (and over the teachers' contracts). To support the teachers' union was, for Rustin and for Randolph, too, the obvious choice to make. Rustin became a top aide to Albert Shanker, the teachers' leader. (When Shanker died a few weeks ago, the photograph that accompanied his obituary in *The New York Times* showed him during the strike with a gray-haired Rustin, unnamed in the photo caption, at his side.) Unfortunately the strike broke down into tribal warfare—Jewish schoolteachers versus black neighborhood activists—and Rustin, as a result, found himself in the novel and horrible circumstance of opposing an aroused black citizenry. Leaders more timid than himself, and more crafty, looked for ways to avoid taking sides during those very nasty months.

But Rustin was incapable of drawing back. Having chosen the teachers' union, and finding the Jewish rank and file subjected by their opponents to all sorts of anti-Semitic vilification, he made a point of standing up against anti-Semitism—even if he also warned the Jews not to exaggerate the importance or the size of bigotry among blacks. He defended the Soviet Jews during the dark days of Brezhnevian anti-Semitism. The radical Third Worldism of some of his old comrades from the pacifist movement drifted into a hard anti-Zionism in the later '60s and '70s, and Rustin objected to that, too. He organized a tiny but noisy black organization in favor of Israel. That was as noble as anything he ever did.

Anderson observes that Rustin's positions were not at all at odds with a reasonable interpretation of black interests in America. Black nationalism and community control in the New York City school system proved to be failures in the years after 1968. Unionism, on the other hand, was definitely in the black interest. Third World liberation movements, once the original anti-colonial impulses had given way to a vogue for Marxism-Leninism, had nothing to offer black America or anyone else. To stand

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up against anti-Semitism was in the highest tradition of the civil rights organizations. Rustin was right about those things. Anderson argues that he went too far in his opposition to Black Studies in American universities, but then again Rustin himself softened his criticisms once it became obvious that not every effort in Black Studies was doomed to be an exercise in feel-good education. Yet, for all the virtue in his several positions, Rustin's unpopularity among blacks (and on most of the left) was set in stone. He confessed to a *Washington Post* reporter that his isolation from the black mainstream sometimes made him cry.

It is fascinating to discover that, even during his period of unpopularity among blacks, Rustin remained a crucial figure in the struggle for black rights—at least sometimes he did. One of the dramatic passages in Anderson's biography recounts a moment in April 1968, when Rustin had already cast his lot with Shanker's United Federation of Teachers. The union scheduled an event to give Rustin an award named after John Dewey, and Rustin's enemies on the left showed up to picket against him—but Rustin failed to attend. The reason was that King had just been assassinated in Memphis.

Someone had to rally the movement in Memphis and ensure, for the sake of dignity and the cause of civil rights, that King's campaign there would go on, in spite of the assassination—and would cling to King's spirit, too, and not degenerate into idiotic riots of the sort that Carmichael was leading in the streets of Washington, D.C. Only, with King barely cold in his coffin, who in all of America was capable of organizing such a campaign? Who was the supreme protest organizer, black or white, in American political life? It was Bayard Rustin in New York. And off he went, southward to the angry streets of Memphis, the needed man in the moment of catastrophe, leaving his allies and his enemies to shout each other down in New York.

Anderson worked for Rustin at the A. Philip Randolph Institute many years ago, which may have left him feeling a bit diffident toward Rustin, perhaps too timid and respectful to evoke the full richness of his personality. His book is attractively written, but compared to an earlier biography that he devoted to Randolph it seems a little pale. Anderson broaches the sexual issues in Rustin's life, but cautiously, with the broachings chastely confined to a specific chapter. On the topic of sex, it is worth glancing at an article by John D'Emilio that appeared in 1995 in the *Radical History Review*, in which D'Emilio contends that Rustin's homosexuality, or rather, other people's prejudice against it, influenced everything he did, and therefore cannot be left to the side.

Anderson's great virtue as a biographer, here as in his book on Randolph, is an ability, not always characteristic of writers in the vexed field of left-wing history, to make sharp and reliable political judgments. His very choice of topics shows how solid are his instincts. Randolph (throughout his life) and Rustin (for much of his life, especially during the period when he reflected Randolph's influence) upheld a specific, invaluable tradition in American politics—a tradition, socialist in origin, that managed to be morally engaged without surrendering to the fumes of righteous wrath; to be pragmatic without shriveling into technocracy; to be democratic in temper and doctrine without restricting its activities to Election Day; to be universalist in values without feeling embarrassed to raise the specific issues facing the black population. That particular tradition is the great missing element in American life right now, and not just among blacks.

PAUL BERMAN is the author of *A Tale of Two Utopias: The Political Journey of the Generation of 1968* (W.W. Norton).

The Uncivilizing Process

BY JEFFREY HERF

The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries by Norbert Elias translated by Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell

(Columbia University Press, 494 pp., $35)

In 1648, when Britain and France were firmly established centralized states, the Peace of Westphalia conferred international diplomatic legitimacy to the political fragmentation of German-speaking Central Europe. "Germany" remained a set of fragmented, weak and vulnerable territories until its "belated" unification in 1871. One merit of Norbert Elias's flawed book is to remind his readers that German state-formation and political culture differed profoundly from those of Britain and France; that this divergence in politics and culture (the Germans call it their *Sonderweg*) revealed itself as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and that Germany's history in the twentieth century cannot be understood without understanding the aftermath of the Thirty Years War in the seventeenth century.

The long and consequential divergence of German development from British and French development has been a standard theme of European and German historiography for decades. Unfortunately, recent debates among German historians over the *Sonderweg* have concentrated on the unacceptably narrow timeframe of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the social sciences, moreover, the overwhelming influence of Max Weber too often led comparative historical analysis to focus primarily on differences between European and non-Western societies while neglecting the differences within Europe. For scholars trained to neglect the peculiarities of British, French and German history, then, Elias's work will come as news. Yet even they will recall that some of their and Elias's contemporaries—Reinhard Bendix, Ralf Dahrendorf, Barrington Moore Jr., even Talcott Parsons—have often drawn attention to Germany's divergence from Britain and France over the long term.

Still, at a time when "local knowledge" of history and culture of particular times and places is on the defensive in American social science, this translation of Elias's book, which appeared in Germany in 1989, is welcome. Elias spent most of his academic career in relative obscurity, but by the time he died in 1990, at the age of 93, he was an intellectual celebrity. Fame came in his 70s as a result of the republication of his *The Civilizing Process* (1939), a comparative historical study of state-formation, personality and daily life among the British, French and German upper classes from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries.

The Germans is a curious mixture of

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insight, creativity and caricature. It holds far too many unjustified claims to originality, and it is woefully neglectful of historical scholarship. The book is a collection of articles and lectures, and its central theme is the impact of the German "pattern of civilization" since the Thirty Years War on twentieth-century German politics and personality: Nazism and the Final Solution, the right-wing terrorism in the Weimar Republic in the 1920s, the left-wing terrorism in West Germany in the 1970s. The questions that Elias poses are old and familiar. And so, too, are his answers.

Among historians of Europe and Germany, the twentieth-century consequences of Germany's extended political fragmentation and belated unification have long been standard themes; but *The Germans* contains not a single reference or footnote to any of the historians who have discussed them. Instead, Elias repeats the received wisdom about the *Sonderweg*. Like his peers and his predecessors, Elias stresses the importance of Germany's central geographical position; memories of decay and weakness, and the strength of local nobles over centralized state power; the relative weakness of the German merchant classes compared to those in Britain, France and Holland; the centrality of Prussian militarism for belated state formation in Germany under Bismarck; and the adaptation of the German middle classes to the norms and customs of the military nobility and its abandonment of the "classical bourgeois realism" and humanism of the eighteenth-century German Enlightenment.

Three centuries of fragmentation and vulnerability to foreign invasion deepened desires for a strong leader who could attain national unity and overcome weakness. This legacy of centrifugal power and repeated fighting made the German aristocracy particularly averse to the peaceful compromises required by parliamentary democracy. Weakness between 1648 and 1871 fostered feelings of inferiority and resentment among the Germans, followed by an exaggerated stress on greatness and power after unification in 1871. The German middle classes, compared to those in Britain, France and the Low Countries, were more willing to adapt to illiberal, militaristic and aristocratic norms, while the aristocracy was less "civilized," that is, more deeply imbued with the European warrior ethos than its more pacific bourgeoisified counterparts in Britain and France.

Today, advocates of the *Sonderweg* would qualify it in light of the work of David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, as well as the late Thomas Nipperdey, concerning the too-often slighted presence of bourgeois, liberal and parliamentary traditions in late nineteenth-century Germany. Nipperdey, who died in 1992, was the rare historian of international and domestic politics who also wrote about family life, working conditions, agriculture, industrialization, demography, religion, learning and the arts. German history has often been treated as the pre-history of 1933. Nipperdey argued that while it certainly was that, it was not only that. There were "multiple continuities" in German history, moments of choice and contingency that defined the history of its nationalism and its liberalism. To understand how Auschwitz was possible, it was necessary to understand why Germany's liberal and democratic possibilities were defeated. Nipperdey's historical work demonstrated that moral passion was compatible with scholarly complexity.

Still, a consensus about German divergence over a period of four centuries persists. Elias's comments about this body of scholarship are surprising, to say the least. In the late 1980s, he wrote that "it is not yet common practice today to link current social and national habitus of a nation to its so-called 'history,' and especially to the state-formation process it has experienced.... One of the functions of this book is to pave the way intellectually and politically in handling such problems." In discussing Nazism and genocide, Elias wrote in 1961—he published the statement in the 1980s, and it appears in this book—that we still "lack an explanation" for mass murder in the "service of a utopia," which "remains an open question to this day." And: "Admittedly, the difficulties arising from the partial discontinuity of German development have contributed to the fact that the development of the German pattern of civilization has remained relatively unresearched." And: "The task of systematically investigating which factors in the long-term development of Germany and of the so-called German 'national character' contributed to the rise of the Nazis is still to be undertaken."

Every one of these statements about the state of scholarship is wrong. Far from evading and failing to research the questions that he considers important, the leading historians and historical sociologists of Germany in this century, many of whom were, like Elias, German-Jewish refugees, have examined every one of the issues that Elias claims to be discovering. Even after he leapt from decades of obscurity to international recognition in the 1970s and 1980s, Elias refused to recognize this community of scholars. A part of his reputation for originality is owed to this proud non-recognition of peers and predecessors.

The Germans contains some familiar insights about Nazism. It is certainly true that the Final Solution of the Jewish Question served no "rational" or "realistic" interest other than "the fulfillment of a deeply rooted belief that had been central for the National Socialist movement from the beginning" regarding the primacy of the "Aryan race" and the destruction of the Jews who could contaminate it. Yes, "there was then, and there still is today, a widespread tendency to underrate political and social belief, to see them as mere froth—as 'ideologies' which have as the only real substance at their basis the interest of the carrier group...." And yes, the "conceptual equipment" of statesmen and politicians in the 1930s and 1940s left them ill-suited to grasp the nature of Nazi barbarism, or a mentality different from their own. But these points were no less true when they were made by Hannah Arendt in 1950 and Karl Dietrich Bracher in 1968 and Lucy Dawidowicz in 1975. Elias mentions none of these authorities.

Elias's lack of generosity is all the more regrettable because he had the gifts of a creative scholar. In his earlier work, he was at his best in depicting how cultural practices can serve as a prism through which to understand the development of power relations in society. And in this book he nicely illuminates the differences between Britain and Germany by focusing on relative informality of the English gentleman and British public schools compared to the formality and strict code of honor among aristocrats in Austria and Germany. He places great weight on dueling and drinking in German student fraternities, and on the contempt for the arts of discussion and compromise that the warrior codes of honor fostered. While the German elite matched swords, the British and French learned how to match wits. Elias traces the greater presence of dueling in Germany compared with Britain and France to the legacy of a weak central state and strong aristocracy able to break its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and to settle disputes on the basis of codes of honor rather than law applicable to all.

Elias can adduce important texts to fresh advantage. Thus, he views Nietzsche's "song of praise to war and strength" as "the adoption by wide sectors of the middle class of his time of

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a warrior code which had at first belonged to the nobility." The shift from Kant's categorical imperative to Nietzsche's proclamation of an amoral will "encapsulates the transition of the German middle class from the position of outsiders to a second-rank place within the establishment." Again, though, Elias makes this point without acknowledging that Georg Lukács had developed it in the 1950s in *The Destruction of Reason*, his 1950s study of the turn of the German middle classes against their humanist heritage.

The Germans is also a book about political terrorism and the conflict of generations in West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s. Here, too, Elias repeats a familiar caricature of West German history. This partial truth goes as follows. In two decades after the war in West Germany, discussion of "the dangerous inheritance which Hitler left behind for the German people" was excluded from public discussion. The West German establishment followed a "policy of concealment," did not subject itself to self-examination, and thus prevented a reform of attitudes of leading strata "in the direction of greater humanity and tolerance." During the Adenauer era a "decisive break" with the authoritarian state did not take place. In the 1960s and 1970s, Social Democratic chancellors Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt "destroyed" the hope of the young left for "an uncompromising debate about the violence of the Hitler period, for a thoroughgoing opposition to the traditional ruling classes, and an effective reform of the existing regime."

As a consequence, the young left of the 1960s and 1970s was faced with a united front of avoidance and repression of the Nazi past by the founding generations. Because of this, the conflict between generations in West Germany, as in Italy and Japan, was especially bitter and led to an extra-parliamentary left that ended in terrorism. The "unbroken stability of national feeling" in Britain, France and Holland produced a more or less nonviolent extra-parliamentary left during and after the 1960s, while the discontinuities in German national identity contributed to the political violence of the 1960s and 1970s. The "loss of a positive national we-image" in Germany, Elias writes, and the memory of the crimes of the Nazi era, fostered the "unrestricted damnation of the Federal Republic by members of the extra-parliamentary opposition, especially the terrorist groups." Gradually a "double-bind process" emerged between an establishment which had refused to face the Nazi past and the terrorist left, "in the course of which groups representing the state and others which feel themselves outside the state drive each other mutually into an escalation of acts of violence."

In an article published in *Der Spiegel* about the events of the Red Army Faction murders and kidnappings, and the government response to them, during the "hot autumn" of 1977, Elias and his associate Michael Schroeder wrote that "a disintegration of the Federal Republic or its transformation into a dictatorial regime" were "both possibilities which one must look squarely in the eye." Terrorism was due partly to the fact that the "problem of the stigma and the guilt feelings bequeathed by National Socialism to subsequent generations" had been "banished from public discussion." In the Federal Republic, it was "quite clear" that the Nazi past "has only been repressed and in no way overcome ... it is important for the health and future of West Germany (if the country does have a future) to draw the problem out of the oblivion into which it has sunk and into the public eye again." The "social meaning" of terrorism in West Germany was one of the "long-term after-effects" of the trauma of National Socialism.

Such an account leaves a lot to be desired. For a start, alongside a pervasive effort to avoid confrontation with the crimes of the Nazi past, one of the distinctive features of the Federal Republic was precisely the effort to discuss it publicly. That distinctive West German tradition was initiated by national political figures including the leader of postwar Social Democracy, Kurt Schumacher; West Germany's first President, Theodor Heuss; Social Democratic leaders in the West German parliament beginning in the 1950s; and West German journalists, scholars, prosecutors and intellectuals. While Konrad Adenauer did avoid public discussion of the issue as much as possible, he also offered significant financial restitution to survivors of Nazi crimes and to the state of Israel.

Moreover, the break with the authoritarian state and the return to the rule of law did indeed take place under Adenauer. The primary barrier to confronting the crimes of the Nazi past was less the legacy of the authoritarian state than the popular will as it was repeatedly expressed in free and open elections that brought and kept Adenauer's conservatives in power. In 1950s West Germany, seeking justice for crimes of the Nazi era brought with it vehement opposition from highly active and self-interested voters. Both Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt encouraged West Germans to confront the Nazi past far more directly than they had during the Adenauer era.

Finally, Elias's resort to clichés about a "double-bind" escalation between the West German government and West German terrorists amounts to a repugnant claim of moral equivalence. The terrorists kidnapped and murdered people. The West German government, faced with terrorists clearly seeking to murder prominent members of the political and economic establishment, tracked them down and arrested them. The Nazi or S.S. past of some of the terrorists' victims, notably the industrialist Hans-Martin Schleyer, surely did not justify their murder; the Federal Republic had a judiciary and a free press, both of which could have been used to focus attention on those who had possibly escaped prosecution in the postwar years. In view of Elias's concern about the trauma of the Nazi past, it is distressing that he does not mention the hatred which the West German radical left and the terrorist left in West Germany directed at "Zionist imperialism" during these years. Moreover, Elias writes not a single word about the economic, diplomatic and military support offered by East Germany to West German terrorists, to the PLO in its terrorist phase and to Arab states that sponsored terrorism.

Elias's account of West Germany's confrontations with the Nazi past misses the "multiple restorations" of past German traditions after 1945. "Continuity with the past" in West Germany after 1945 included some continuity with the legacies of anti-Semitism and anti-democratic politics that contributed to Nazism. But it also included continuity with those German political traditions that had been crushed in 1933, the "other Germanies" of social democracy, liberalism and a moderate conservatism that embraced the West. In place of this political mosaic, Elias offers a caricature of a West Germany composed of left-wing terrorists confronting unreconstructed reactionary politicians. Everyone in between drops out. In Elias's account, those who shout the loudest—or resort to violence most readily—get the reward of disproportionate attention.

The Germans captures only some of the many truths of German history. It is too easy, alas, to write about modern Germany without complexity and contingency, without the shades of gray that are required for the understanding of its terrible years of black and white.

JEFFREY HERF teaches history at Ohio University. His book *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* will be published by Harvard University Press in the fall.

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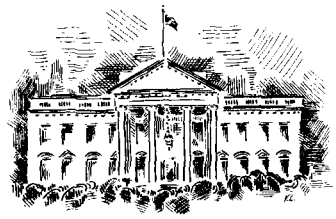
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Strait was the gate

THE MANSION OF DEATH IN SAN Diego made one melancholy for many reasons, and one of them was that these people killed themselves for kitsch. It was not the eccentricity of their vision that made their fate so sad, it was the crudity of their vision. They had mistaken the junk of the entertainment industry for the stuff of holy life. "We watch a lot of 'Star Trek,' a lot of *Star Wars*," said one of the shaven talking heads on the tape they left behind, and "it's time to put into practice what we've learned." They had escaped so much of America, but they had not escaped its thralldom to the screen and its superstitions. What fools. A society may be known by the quality of its spirituality, and the flock of Bo and Peep, or Do and Ti, or Guinea and Pig, or Him and Her, with their ufological doctrines of salvation, have proven again that the credulity of this country is, well, unbelievable.

IT WAS AN AMERICAN STORY IN other ways, too. That tape is a great document of American lostness. The serenity of these men and women did not disguise the magnitude of their misery. "I've been on this planet for thirty-one years," one woman told the camera, "and there's nothing here for me." They had wandered across America like good American adventists, and of course they had not been delivered, and those who survived the eschatological disappointment of the 1970s, when a spaceship failed to appear, finally grew tired of waiting and seized the occasion of a comet to leave the world in which they could not stand to live. (A comet was on the scene for the Great Disappointment of 1843, too.) They were simply in search of extinction. Dying unto was not enough. Only dying would do.

THE UNIFORMITY OF THEIR LOOK and their language notwithstanding, the tape showed thirty-nine missing individuals. As I watched it, I thought about the futility of generalization. Policymakers, disaggregate! But the commentaries on the tragedy were soon filled with everybody's defense of their most cherished aggregation. "The message that Mr. Applewhite and Ms. Nettles preached," wrote a *New York Times* reporter, "was well suited to a nation traumatized by the loss of the war in Vietnam, the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon, and years of social upheaval and violence." A famous writer of science fiction rose to defend his genre ("I don't write that stuff at all"). A liberal questioned "our contented self-image of unstoppable economic progress and sunlit domestic bliss." A conservative blamed Heaven's Gate on the naked public square, observing that "in today's America ... traditional religion has been suppressed for a generation." (And untraditional religion leads to phenobarbital.) And isn't a millennium upon us? The therapeutic power of cliché was everywhere in evidence.



WHAT ALL THESE commentators were trying to elide was the reality of the hunger of the soul. Since it was incontrovertible, it had to be controverted. For the inanity of Marshall Herff Applewhite's teaching did not vitiate the truth of what had transpired: people had sacrificed everything, and then themselves, for a spiritual objective. Indeed, the cyber-nonsense that they posted on the Web was punctuated by sentences of a peculiar beauty, such as this one: "Humans with deposits containing souls can likely be identified at this time as some of those who are rapidly losing respect for this world or its system." That is the wisdom of the poorly adjusted. Who will deny it? There are verities that are available to the lost and the losers.

THE ASCETIC HACKERS IN RANCHO Santa Fe busied themselves with speculation about the fate of the soul, about the relation of the soul to the body, about the consequences for the inner world of traffic with the outer world. These are old and good and hard subjects, and I cannot say that pondering them is in any way less important than pondering, say, "the iron law of stardom," or what makes Miramax tick. Those who dwell on the religious themes always run the risk of seeming unsophisticated; and if they are really lucky, they will not only seem unsophisticated, they will also be unsophisticated. A great writer said to me many years ago that "the truth, whatever it is, is strange." I felt castigated by his remark. We were sitting on a summer lawn in Vermont and speaking about the gullibility of intellectuals, and he counted gullibility among the sins of his own life; and what struck me was the humility of his tone. Think strictly, he was saying, and expect an unexpected result. The important thing, in the analysis of existence, is never to care about embarrassment.

BUT THEY CASTRATED THEMSELVES. So they did. The ancient Christian way of putting it, I believe, is that they made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Here is Peter Brown on the theology of Origen, who is said to have castrated himself in 206, when he was 20:

> The body itself would become less "thick," less "coagulated," less "hardened," as the numbing inertia of the spirit thawed in the growing heat of its yearning for the Wisdom of God.... The "vessel of clay" of the present self would be shattered, to be remolded, ever again, into containers of ever wider capacity, in stages of life that stretched far beyond the grave. This was a view of the bodies of actual men and women taken from a disturbingly distant vantage point. It meant that Origen was prepared to look at sexuality in the human person as if it were a mere passing phase. It was a dispensable adjunct of the personality that played no role in defining the essence of the human spirit. Men and women could do without it even in this present existence. Human life, lived in a body endowed with sexual characteristics, was but the last dark hour of a long night that would vanish with the dawn.

NO, I AM NOT MAKING AN APOLogy for castration. But the secession from sexuality as a feature of religious discipline was not invented by that homeless soul from Houston, who also taught that the body was a "container" and a "vessel." (And a "vehicle" and a "carton.") More to the point, it represents a genuinely critical standpoint, as anybody who has known the despotism of desire will affirm. And it is downright revolutionary in America, where it is preposterous to deny your sexuality, but it is not preposterous to live for your sexuality. Why not subdue the body, when the body is an idol? I understand that the flesh is also an instrument of the spirit; but not the flesh as America reveres it.

SO THEY GOT OUT, SPACESHIP OR no spaceship. I hope it was good, though I can't see how. I can see that the wrong answers to the right questions are preferable to the right answers to the wrong questions.

LEON WIESELTIER

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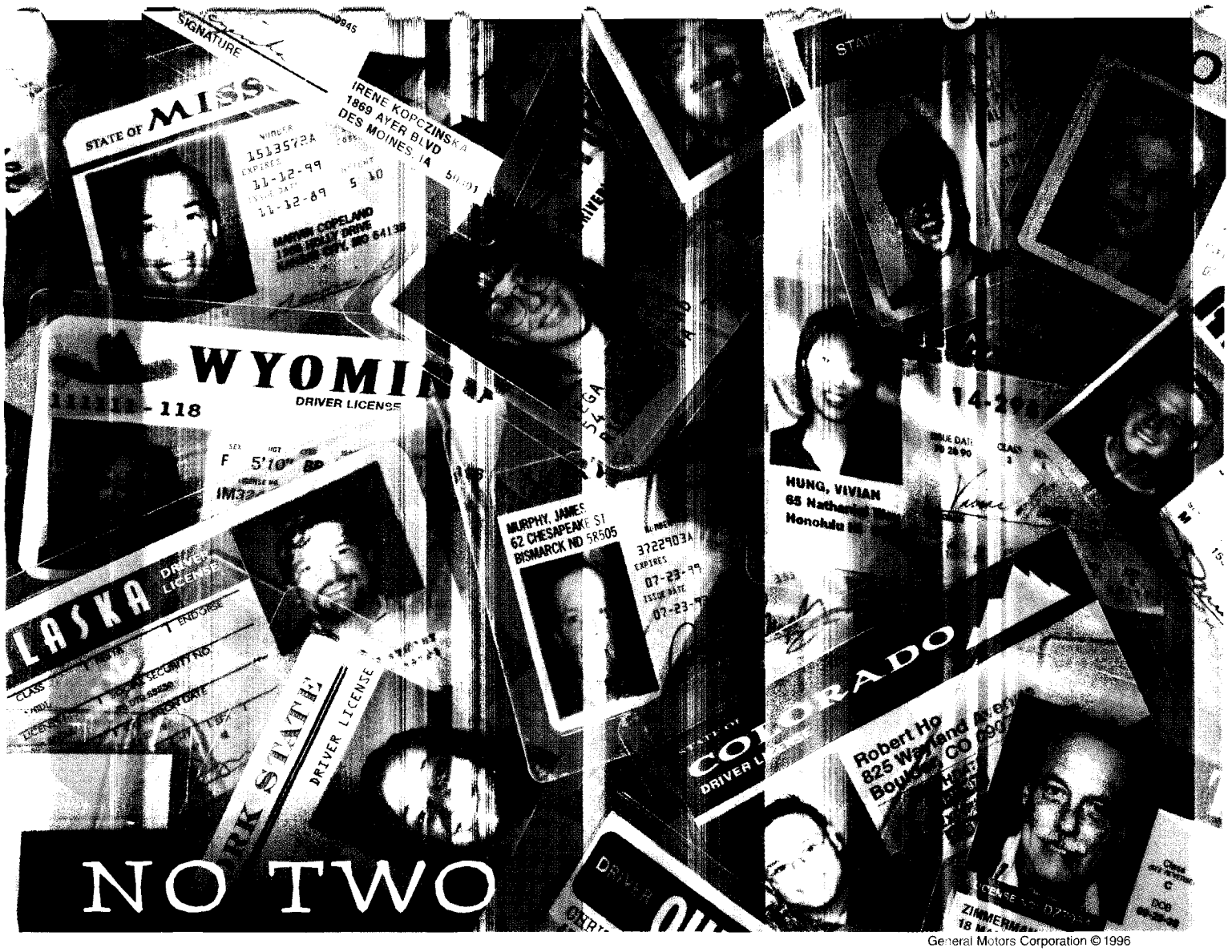

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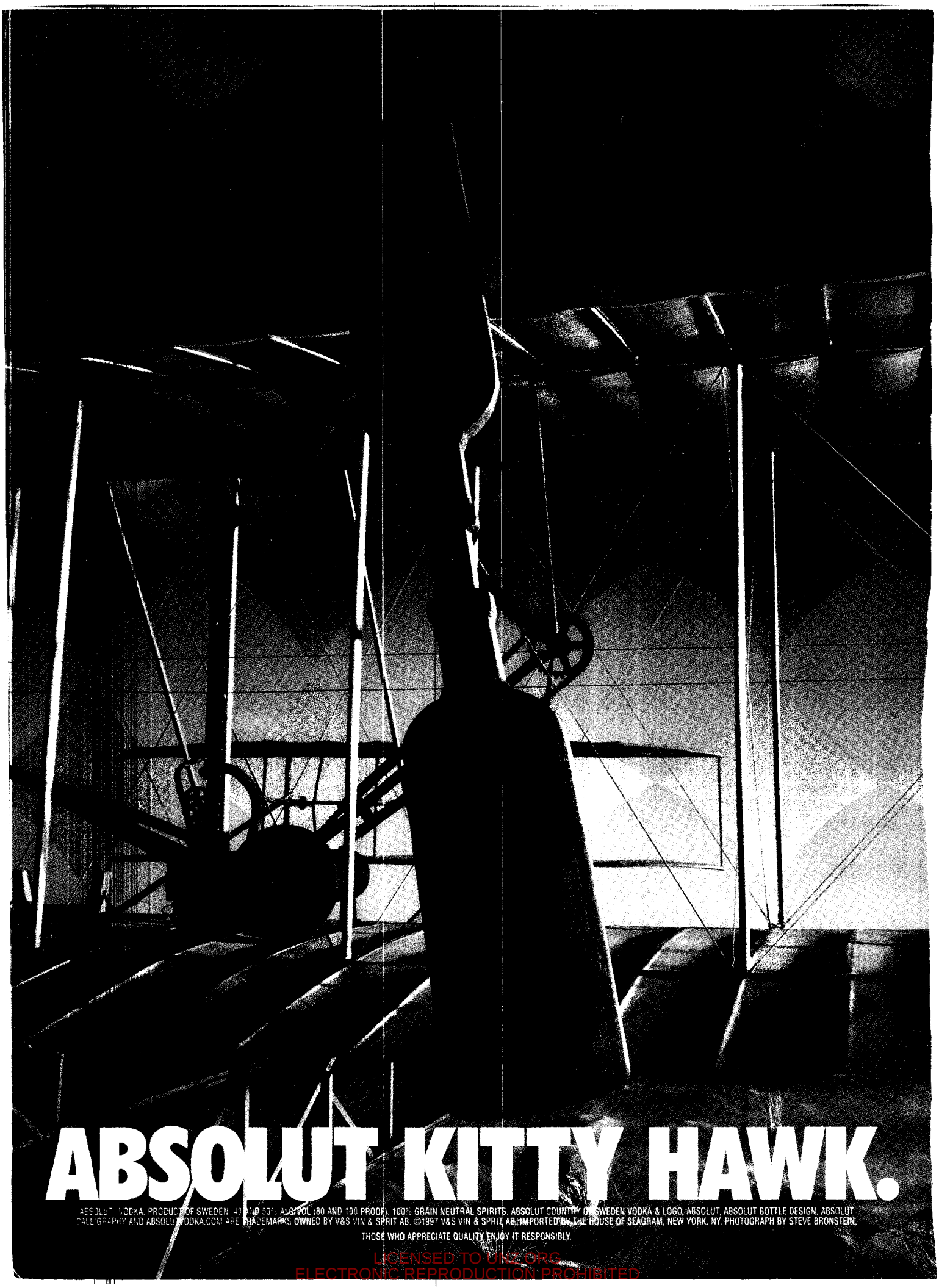

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